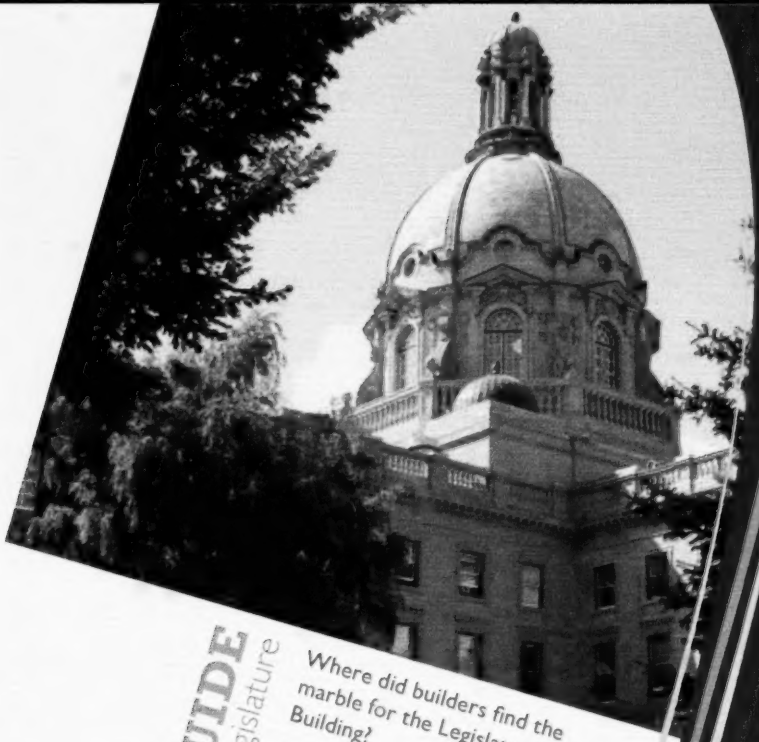
The Citizen's Guide

to the Alberta Legislature **Eighth Edition**



THE CITIZEN'S GUIDE
to the Alberta Legislature

Where did builders find the marble for the Legislature Building?

How is an American state Legislature different from our provincial Legislature?

What happens during a typical legislative session?

This booklet is designed to address these and many other questions related to the history, traditions and procedures of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta.

The booklet also contains review questions and answers as well as a glossary of parliamentary terminology.

EIGHTH EDITION
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Table of Contents

1. The Foundation 1

The Parliamentary System in Alberta 2
A Constitutional Monarchy 6
The Levels of Government 10
Two Styles of Governing:
Provincial and State Legislatures 14

2. Representing the People 17

The Provincial General Election 18
You and Your MLA 22
Executive Council 29

3. Rules and Traditions 31

Symbols and Ceremonies:
The Mace and the Black Rod 32
The Speaker 36
Parliamentary Procedure 39

4. Getting the Business Done 41

How the Assembly Works 42
Taking Part 46
Making Alberta's Laws 50
Putting Your Tax Dollars to Work 54
The Legislative Assembly Office 57
It's All in *Hansard* 60

5. The Building and Its Symbols 63

The Legislature Building 64
The Emblems of Alberta 68
The Legislative Assembly Brand 71

Glossary 73

Index 81

Study Questions 93

Study Questions 94
Answer Key 104

Selected Bibliography 109

The contents of this publication reflect the practices and procedures of the Legislative Assembly as of August 30, 2013. Readers are advised to check with the Legislative Assembly Office to ensure that the information as it relates to parliamentary practice within the Legislative Assembly is up to date.

Alberta Legislature
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Current tour times are available on the Assembly website www.assembly.ab.ca and are listed under Visitor Information.

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1. The Foundation

The Parliamentary System in Alberta

Parliamentary democracy in Alberta is based on principles of government that are centuries old. Some of these are rooted in ancient Greece and Rome while others developed in Great Britain (now the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland).

Ancient Roots

The word "democracy" comes from two Greek words: "demos," meaning people, and "kratia," meaning rule. The idea that the people should rule themselves developed in Greece about 2,500 years ago. Ancient Greece was divided into small units called city states, and all citizens assembled to make decisions governing the city state.

Houses of Parliament, United Kingdom

In modern representative democracies citizens elect people to represent them in the Assembly rather than attending the Assembly themselves. But the basic principle behind democracy as we know it, the idea that power is fundamentally vested in the citizens, was evident in the direct democracy practised in ancient Greece.

Our British Heritage

The Greeks gave us the ideas that made the parliamentary system of government possible, but our modern Parliament developed in what is now the United Kingdom. It came into being because monarchs needed revenue to fight wars and run the kingdom, and the nobility refused to pay taxes unless they had a say in how that money would be spent.

From the 13th to 19th centuries the British Parliament struggled with the monarch for control of taxation, spending and law-making, resulting in an antagonistic relationship between the Crown and Parliament. Since the late 17th century the Prime Minister and cabinet gradually obtained more and more control while the monarch became largely a ceremonial head of state and almost routinely approved Parliament's decisions. In the Alberta Legislature today the monarch remains the official head of state, as represented by the Lieutenant Governor. The Premier as head of government along with the cabinet governs in the monarch's name.

The bicameral, or two-House, system also originated in England. The English Parliament evolved into an elected House of Commons and appointed House of Lords in the 14th century. Canada has a bicameral system at the national level. Each provincial Legislature consists of a unicameral Legislature with an elected Assembly.

Holding elections in which ordinary citizens elect representatives to parliament is also part of our English heritage. Local village leaders were called to parliament as early as the 13th century although voting rights were extended to the middle and working classes only in the 19th and 20th centuries and to women and aboriginal peoples in the 20th century.

Responsible Government

Our system is based on the British parliamentary principle of responsible government, meaning that the cabinet must have the support of a majority in the elected Assembly to continue governing; that is, the government is responsible, or accountable, to the Assembly. If a major policy or law is defeated, the government must resign and call an election. Responsible government was formally incorporated into the 1689 English Bill of Rights and has always been part of the Canadian system. An early example of the use of the principle can be seen in 1742, when the first Prime Minister of Great Britain, Sir Robert Walpole, resigned after two of his major policies were defeated in the House of Commons.

In this system the areas of proposing, passing and administering laws overlap somewhat. The Premier and cabinet, or executive branch, are the chief lawmakers. The Premier is the leader of the party commanding a majority of support of elected Members in the Assembly while Cabinet Ministers are appointed MLAs from that party. The executive branch consists of appointed Members of the legislative branch. Ministers propose most of the laws that pass, and they vote on them along with their fellow MLAs. As well, Ministers are responsible for administering government ministries and the laws guiding them. The word "government" is used in many different ways, but in the British parliamentary system it has a very specific meaning and refers strictly to the Premier or Prime Minister and the cabinet.

A party is said to have majority support or command a majority when that party holds more than half of the seats in the Assembly. In this case, the government formed is called a majority government. In Alberta's parliamentary system majority governments tend to be stable because voting on major government initiatives such as Bills and budget estimates is normally along party lines. The defeat of a major government initiative would mean the downfall of the government; therefore, party unity is necessary for the government to remain in office. Consequently, party discipline, under which all MLAs from the same party support their party's policies in the Assembly, is a tradition in the parliamentary system.

A party may also be said to command a majority if it holds fewer than half of the seats in the Assembly provided that enough Members from opposition parties support its major initiatives to ensure that they pass. This is called a minority government. If one of its major initiatives is defeated, the government must resign, usually resulting in an election call. Minority governments rely on compromise with Members from other parties, so their Bills and spending priorities may represent

a consensus of different parties' ideas. Thus, opposition Members in a minority government Assembly have more influence on government business than they do with a majority government.

Parliament Comes to Canada

The British brought their political institutions to the Great Lakes region of North America following the conquest of New France by British forces in 1759-1760. The Royal Proclamation of 1763 created the province of Quebec as part of the British Empire. Under the *Constitutional Act* of 1791 Quebec was divided into the two colonies of Lower Canada and Upper Canada, each with its own Lieutenant Governor. In Lower Canada an elite group of mostly English-speaking settlers and merchants called the Château Clique aided the Lieutenant Governor. The Lieutenant Governor of Upper Canada was assisted by a privileged group of wealthy English-speaking businessmen and professionals commonly called the Family Compact.

In 1837 an armed rebellion against this system of governance occurred in both colonies, and the United Kingdom sent John George Lambton, the first Earl of Durham, to address the colonists' grievances. Lord Durham's findings were made into a report known as the Durham Report. The Durham Report was presented in 1839 and recommended the adoption of "responsible government," with a cabinet formed from the party holding the majority of seats in an elected Assembly. In 1840 the *Act of Union* united Upper and Lower Canada and provided for a Legislative Assembly with equal representation from each colony. Responsible government eventually evolved in the British North American colonies and after 1867 formed the foundation of the governance system of the new country of Canada.

Canada's parliamentary system differs from the system that has generally been used by the United Kingdom in that Canada is a federation with a national Parliament and provincial Legislatures. Legislative power is divided between the federal Parliament and provincial Legislatures, each with its own areas of jurisdiction. Canada modelled its federal system on that of the United States. Both countries occupy a vast geographic area, and the federal system provided the strength of unity while allowing local control where practical.

Confederation in 1867 united Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. To extend the new dominion, the Canadian government took control of the vast fur-trading empire of the Hudson's Bay Company in 1870, calling it the North-West Territories. The area included what is now Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Yukon Territory, Nunavut and the Northwest Territories in addition to parts of what is now Ontario and Quebec.

Territorial Governance

In 1872 the federal government passed the *Dominion Lands Act* to encourage the settlement of Canada's prairies. The federal government also built railroads and established the North West Mounted Police. In 1875 the *North-West Territories Act* established a territorial government consisting of a Lieutenant Governor and a five-Member council, all of whom were appointed by Ottawa. The *Dominion Lands Act* was not initially greatly successful in encouraging the settlement of the prairies. Rather, the Act, combined with additional railway development and the decreasing availability of settlement lands in the United States, contributed to the settlement of the prairies in later years. Between 1901 and 1911 Alberta experienced a population boom, with its population increasing from 73,022 to 374,295.

The *North-West Territories Act* also provided for elected council Members to replace appointed ones. By 1888 locally elected Members outnumbered appointed ones, and the North-West Territories Council became the North-West Territories Legislative Assembly. By this time it had grown to 22 Members plus three non-voting Members, including seven from the provisional district of Alberta.

Provincehood

Provincehood naturally followed population growth and elected representation. The settlers were geographically isolated from Ottawa and felt they should manage their own affairs. The Territorial Assembly gained control first over taxation and spending and later over the right to make the laws that governed the territories. Ottawa granted the territories responsible government in 1897, and in 1905 the provinces of Saskatchewan and Alberta were created.

Canada's Prime Minister at the time, Sir Wilfrid Laurier, designated Alexander Rutherford to be the first Premier of Alberta, and the province was divided into 25 constituencies. The first provincial general election was held on November 9, 1905, with the Liberals winning 22 of the 25 seats. One of the Assembly's first decisions was to retain Edmonton as the permanent capital of Alberta.

Today Alberta's Members of the Legislative Assembly meet in Edmonton at least once a year to decide the fate of our tax dollars and pass the laws that govern our everyday lives. Parliamentary democracy is well suited to our modern way of life. While its roots are in antiquity, its strength lies in its ability to adapt to a changing world.

A Constitutional Monarchy

Canada is a constitutional monarchy. Although Canada's head of state is a monarch, currently Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, its supreme law is the Constitution. The constitutional monarchy as a form of government came about when English monarchs, once supreme rulers of their realms, were gradually forced to share power with Parliament, which represented the loyal subjects. The history of the parliamentary system is thus intertwined with the history of the British monarchy. As the powers of Parliament increased, the powers of monarchs diminished. In the British parliamentary system today monarchs and their representatives have real power but rarely use it. Parliaments make laws and monarchs have to obey them, and although all proposed new laws must have royal approval, that approval often appears to be a formality. However, if they have compelling reasons, Governors General and Lieutenant Governors in Canada can refuse to approve Bills. Other examples of constitutional monarchies include Japan, Spain, the Netherlands and Denmark.

Of course, monarchs did not want to give up their power and often fought to keep it. In the 18th century, for example, the United States declared its independence and fought a war against the British Crown. As a result, the American head of state is not a monarch but an elected president, and the United States is a republic.

The Role of the Lieutenant Governor

In Canada the monarch's representatives are the Governor General at the federal level and the Lieutenant Governor at the provincial level. The Governor General in Council (in practice, the Prime Minister) appoints each Lieutenant Governor for a period of five years, and the federal government pays his or her salary. The Lieutenant Governor does not belong to a political party and does not favour one party or its policies over others.

While their modern role appears to be largely ceremonial, Lieutenant Governors have the power under extraordinary circumstances to dismiss the government and call an election; thus, Lieutenant Governors are an important part of our Constitution. According to Frank MacKinnon:

> *The offices of Governor General and Lieutenant-Governor are constitutional fire extinguishers with a potent mixture of powers for use in great emergencies. Like real extinguishers, they appear in bright colours and are strategically located. But everyone hopes their emergency powers will never be used; the fact they are not used does not render them useless; and it is generally understood there are severe penalties for tampering with them.*[1]

[1] Frank MacKinnon, *The Crown in Canada*. Calgary: Glenbow-Alberta Institute; McClelland and Stewart West, 1976. p.122.

In fact, monarchs and their representatives have from time to time refused Bills. In 1937 Alberta's Lieutenant Governor, the Honourable John C. Bowen, refused to grant royal assent to three Bills passed during Premier William Aberhart's Social Credit government. Two of the Bills dealt with financial matters that fell within federal jurisdiction while the third, the *Accurate News and Information Act*, would have placed restrictions on how media reported the news and was thus considered by many to be unconstitutional.

Some of the responsibilities of a Lieutenant Governor are:

- Issues the royal proclamation which calls the Legislative Assembly into session
- Reads the Speech from the Throne at the opening of each session
- Grants royal assent to Bills which have passed third reading in the Assembly
- Approves cabinet orders (orders in council)
- Prorogues, or discontinues, a session of the Legislature
- Dissolves the Legislature when an election is called; and
- Ensures that the province always has a Premier who has the confidence of the majority of the elected Members of the Assembly

Canada's Constitution

Canada's Constitution determines the powers and responsibilities of the various governments, the courts and the Crown and gives its people certain rights. When the Trudeau government patriated Canada's Constitution in 1982, it not only brought the Constitution home from the United Kingdom but also modernized it by combining Acts and orders dating from 1867.

The *British North America Act, 1867*, later referred to as the *Constitution Act, 1867*, united Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick in Confederation. The Act divided powers between the federal Parliament (the House of Commons; the Senate; and the monarch's representative, the Governor General) and provincial Legislatures (the Legislative Assembly and the monarch's representative, the Lieutenant Governor). The *BNA Act* also gave Parliament the power to make laws "for the Peace, Order, and good Government" of Canada. The *BNA Act* is the foundation of our modern Constitution.

The *Constitution Act, 1871* provided for the creation of new provinces. All Acts which created provinces, beginning with the *Manitoba Act, 1870*, are part of our Constitution.

The Rupert's Land and North-Western Territory Order of 1870 created the new Canadian jurisdiction of the North-West Territories, which comprised what is now Alberta, Saskatchewan and Yukon Territory as well as most of Manitoba and parts of Nunavut, the Northwest Territories, Ontario and Quebec.

The Adjacent Territories Order of 1880 brought into Confederation all remaining British possessions and territories in North America except Newfoundland, which joined Confederation on March 31, 1949.

The *Statute of Westminster, 1931* gave Canada full sovereignty over its own affairs except that the British Parliament retained the power to amend Canada's Constitution. This law marks the point at which Canada became legally independent from the United Kingdom.

The *Constitution Act, 1982* combined the above Acts and orders, gave Canada the power to amend its own Constitution (patriation) and enshrined Canadians' rights and freedoms in a Charter.

The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms

Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, 1982

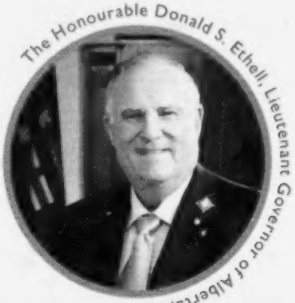
The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms enshrines in Canada's supreme law the rights and freedoms of people living in a democratic country, including rights particularly Canadian. The rights and freedoms recognized in the Charter include

- Freedom of conscience and religion
- Freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression, including freedom of the press and other media of communication
- Freedom of peaceful assembly
- Freedom of association
- Democratic rights (the right to vote plus other provisions dealing with elections and representation)
- Mobility rights (the right to move about freely in Canada or to leave the country)
- Legal rights (rights people have when brought before the justice system, including "the right to life, liberty and security of the person")
- Equality rights ("every individual is equal before and under the law")

- Official languages (English and French are Canada's official languages and are equal in status)
- Minority language educational rights (English or French speakers who are in the minority in a province have the right to have their children educated in their mother tongue in that province)

Alberta's Lieutenant Governors

Name	Dates of Office
Honourable George H.V. Bulyea	1905–1915
Honourable Robert G. Brett	1915–1925
Honourable William Egbert	1925–1931
Honourable William L. Walsh	1931–1936
Honourable Philip C.H. Primrose	1936–1937
Honourable John C. Bowen	1937–1950
Honourable John J. Bowlen	1950–1959
Honourable J. Percy Page	1959–1966
Honourable J.W. Grant MacEwan	1966–1974
Honourable Ralph G. Steinhauer	1974–1979
Honourable Frank C. Lynch-Staunton	1979–1985
Honourable W. Helen Hunley	1985–1991
Honourable T. Gordon Towers	1991–1996
Honourable H.A. (Bud) Olson	1996–2000
Honourable Lois E. Hole	2000–2005
Honourable Norman L. Kwong	2005–2010
Honourable Donald S. Ethell	2010–



The Levels of Government

In Canada we elect people to represent us at different levels: federal, provincial or territorial and municipal (local). The Constitution grants different areas of responsibility to the federal Parliament and provincial Legislatures. Under the Constitution Parliament has authority over the territories, but in practice it has turned much of that authority over to the territories themselves.

The Constitution does not provide for local municipalities, but each province creates its own local elected bodies and gives them certain responsibilities. The Parliament of Canada makes laws for the entire country while each provincial or territorial Legislature makes laws that apply only in that province or territory.

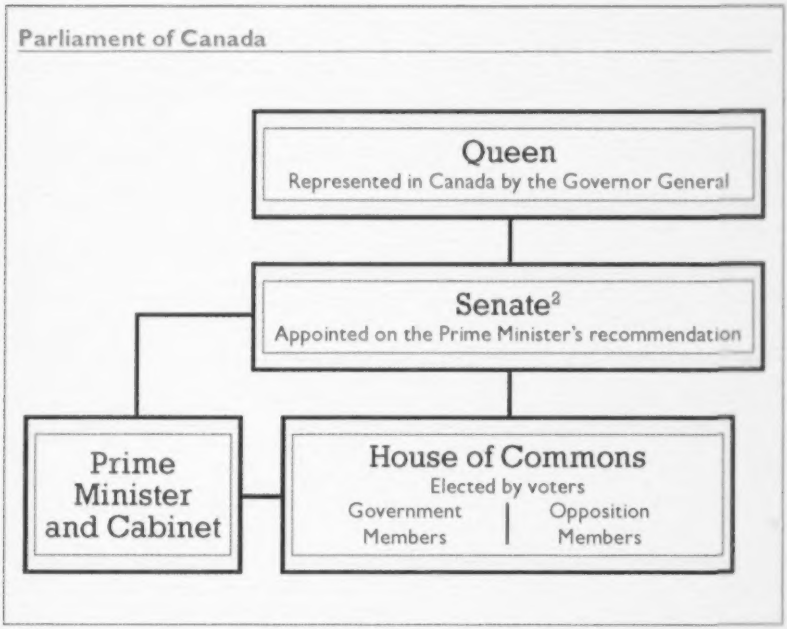
What Is Government?

Canadians often use the term "government" to mean everything connected with making laws, collecting taxes, enforcing laws and providing public services. However, in our parliamentary system "government" has a very limited and specific meaning. It is the team of elected representatives with the support of a majority in the Assembly that provides leadership in making laws and is responsible for the government ministries that deliver the programs and services mandated by those laws. In this system government is also referred to as the cabinet.

Federal

Canada's federal Parliament consists of a bicameral House comprising the House of Commons, the Senate and the Governor General, who represents the Queen.

In Canada the elected House of Commons makes laws, approves government expenditures and helps to hold the government accountable, and the appointed Senate gives the Commons' proposed laws "sober second thought." Both Houses actually have the power to initiate Bills, but Bills providing for expenditure of public money or the imposition of taxes cannot be introduced in the Senate.



The Prime Minister and cabinet (the government) are always members of the same political party, usually the one that has the most Members in the House of Commons.

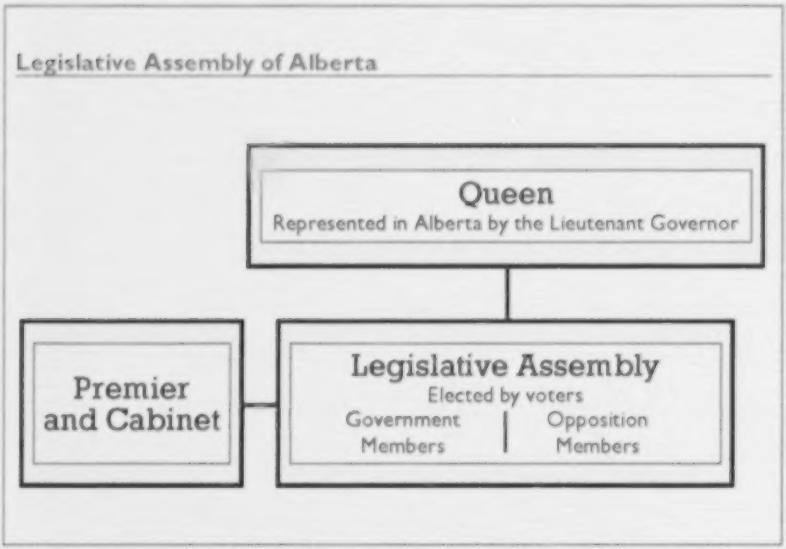
Senators can also be members of cabinet. Usually the Leader of the Government in the Senate is named to cabinet, but it is not unusual for other Senators to be added if their provinces are unrepresented in cabinet.

Federal areas of responsibility under our Constitution include citizenship, foreign policy, national defence, currency, banking and the postal service.

[2] Please note that some members of Cabinet could be members of the Senate.

Provincial

The provincial counterpart of Parliament is the Legislature. Alberta's Legislature consists of a unicameral House called the Legislative Assembly and the Lieutenant Governor, representing the Queen. Like their federal counterparts, the Premier and cabinet are from the same political party, the one with the most elected Members in the Assembly.



The provinces' areas of responsibility as defined in the *Constitution Act, 1867* (earlier referred to as the *British North America Act, 1867*) include health, child welfare, municipal government, transportation, labour, property and civil rights and education.

Territorial

Under Canada's Constitution the territories have no authority to govern, so the official head of a territorial government is the federally appointed Commissioner. However, in recent years the Commissioner has become more like a Lieutenant Governor, giving final approval to legislation passed by the Assembly but leaving the major decision-making up to the elected Members.

A territory's areas of responsibility are similar to those of a province.

In the Northwest Territories all candidates run as independents. Consequently, elections are not won by parties, so party leaders do not automatically become government leaders. Instead, the whole Legislative Assembly elects the government

leader, who appoints the cabinet (called the Executive Council) from among all Members of the Legislative Assembly.

As with the Northwest Territories, Nunavut MLAs do not represent political parties. Nunavut is governed by a public government, granting equal representation to all residents. In Nunavut's Legislative Assembly decisions are said to be made by consensus although a simple majority is all that is required to pass legislation. Members of the Assembly who are not Cabinet Ministers act as the opposition.

The Yukon Legislative Assembly is much like a provincial Assembly. Yukon has adopted the party system, under which the government leader is the leader of the party electing the most Members to the Assembly. The government leader appoints Cabinet Ministers from among the elected Members of that party, and together the government leader and Ministers make up the government.

Municipal

Citizens of counties, towns and cities elect representatives to be responsible for municipal, or local, government. Municipal government can mean any of the following:

- **Counties, improvement districts, et cetera**
  - Reeve (the head)
  - Council (reeve and councillors)
- **Towns and cities**
  - Mayor (the head)
  - Council (mayor, aldermen and/or councillors)

The council is the body of elected representatives, including its head. Council members may belong to political parties, but they do not represent a party when they run for election. Also, unlike the Prime Minister or Premiers, reeves and mayors are elected directly to their positions.

Each provincial Legislature determines the local governments' areas of responsibility such as local fire and police services, libraries, transportation within the municipality or county, pest control and so on. Municipal governments may pass laws, called bylaws, to govern these areas.

Two Styles of Governing: Provincial and State Legislatures

The Canadian and American systems of government are both democracies with roots in the British parliamentary system. As well, both Canada and the United States chose the federal system, dividing power between regional and national governments, giving each its own areas of jurisdiction. In spite of their obvious similarities the two systems are quite different. For example, Canada is a constitutional monarchy while the United States is a republic.

The Person at the Top

Constitutionally, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II is the Queen of Canada and the head of state while the real power is held by the head of government (the Prime Minister at the federal level or the Premier at the provincial level) and cabinet. On the advice of the Prime Minister the Governor General appoints a Lieutenant Governor to represent the monarch in each province. The Lieutenant Governor typically gives royal assent to Bills, opens and closes sessions of the Legislature and accepts the Premier's resignation if the government is defeated in the Assembly. In rare and exceptional circumstances a Lieutenant Governor may invoke the reserve powers of withholding royal assent or reserving a Bill; however, these powers have not been used in over 50 years.

Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II visits the Alberta Legislature in 2005

In the United States the head of state and head of government are one and the same. This is true at both the federal level (President) and state level (Governor). At the state level there is a Lieutenant Governor as well, but the person who fills this position is elected, presides over the state Senate and fills in for the Governor when he or she is absent.

The Legislatures

All provincial Canadian Legislatures are unicameral, meaning that there is only one body of elected representatives. In Alberta this body is called the Legislative Assembly.

In the United States all state Legislatures except Nebraska's are bicameral, meaning that the people elect two groups of representatives, a House of Representatives and a Senate.

Elections

In Canada some provinces have decided to set fixed election dates whereby a maximum term of office is specified. There is no minimum term of service as a term of government can be cut short at any time if a major government proposal is defeated. This is considered a vote of nonconfidence, which results in the fall of the government and an election call. Voters elect candidates in their own constituencies and do not directly elect their Premier. The leader of the party electing the most seats normally becomes the Premier.

In state Legislatures terms of office are fixed, and citizens elect the Governor and the Legislature separately. The whole state elects the Governor while Members of the Legislature are elected by their own districts. It is not unusual for the Governor to belong to a different political party from that of the majority of the Members of the House of Representatives or the Senate.

The Party System

Political parties play an important role in both provincial and state Legislatures. In the Canadian system the survival of the government depends on party unity. Party discipline prevents Members of the Assembly from publicly criticizing their party or voting against its policies or decisions. If enough government Members vote against a government proposal, it can be defeated. As mentioned above, the defeat of a major government proposal is a vote of nonconfidence.

In the American system the role of parties in the House is less obvious. Elected representatives frequently support their local interests at the expense of their party's overall policies, and the Governor does not necessarily control the Legislature even if the Governor's party has a majority of seats.

Powers of Government

The powers of democratic governments are divided among the executive, the legislative and the judicial branches. The executive branch administers existing laws and, through Cabinet Ministers, proposes new ones. The legislative branch approves laws by voting on them in an Assembly, and the judicial branch interprets the laws and applies them through the courts.

Provincial and state governments have organized these powers very differently. In Canada we have the principle of responsible government (see The Parliamentary System in Alberta), meaning that the cabinet's major proposals for laws and spending must have the approval of a majority in the Legislative Assembly. In addition, the Premier and Cabinet Ministers, or executive branch, are also Members of the Legislative Assembly, or legislative branch, and both the Premier and Cabinet Ministers may vote on the Bills they introduce. Therefore, parliamentary government features a concentration or fusion of powers.

In the United States the executive and legislative branches are completely separate, and this total separation of powers is what most distinguishes the American system from the Canadian. A state Governor is not a Member of the Legislature but is elected separately and appoints the cabinet, which does not include Members of the Legislature. The Governor provides leadership and initiates important laws, particularly the state budget, but does not vote on Bills in the House of Representatives or the Senate. Instead, when both Houses have passed a Bill, the Governor signs it into law.

Making Laws

In both provincial and state Legislatures ideas for new laws or changes to old ones are called Bills and come from the same sources: citizens, elected Members or special-interest groups and other organizations. However, Bills become law in very different ways in the two countries.

In Canadian Legislatures Members introduce Bills in the House at first reading. All Bills are introduced in complete form and read almost exactly the same as they would should they become the law of the province. Bills are then debated in three stages—second reading, Committee of the Whole and third reading—and must pass each stage to go on to the next. Passage is by a simple majority of Members present for the vote. Government Bills—Bills that receive the prior approval of cabinet—often pass with few, if any, amendments while Bills introduced by non-Cabinet Members have less chance of passing at all (see Making Alberta's Laws). After passing third reading, Bills are granted royal assent by the Lieutenant Governor before officially becoming law.

In bicameral state Legislatures in the United States Bills may be introduced in the House of Representatives or the Senate. In some states representatives may introduce a Bill in skeleton form to see if the idea will fly before going to the trouble of drafting a complete Bill. Once introduced, Bills are referred to a committee that studies them, changing them where necessary to ensure their eventual passage or blocking further consideration. The committee reports its findings to the House or the Senate, depending on where the Bill originated, and successful Bills are considered there for some time before being put to a vote. Voting in state Legislatures is not necessarily along party lines, as it is in Canada, and often a Bill sponsored by a Member from the dominant party will not have enough support from that party to pass. State Legislatures also make no distinction between government Bills and private Members' Bills; however, some Bills in some states must have a two-thirds majority to pass. Bills that pass one body then undergo the same process in the other. If Bills are successful, depending on the state, the Governor signs them into law or may veto all or parts of them.

2. Representing the People

The Provincial General Election

Canada's Constitution requires that provincial elections be held at least once every five years although almost every province now has fixed election dates set at every four years. A government that waits until the end of its legal term to call an election runs the risk of being forced to call one at a bad time politically, thus reducing its chances of winning. Conversely, governments that take advantage of favourable political winds by calling an election too soon—a snap election—risk criticism for wasting public money. Governments normally look for the happy combination of an upsurge of popularity at the polls and the winding down of their mandate to call an election.

Holding an election is a complex affair, beginning well before the Premier formally asks the Lieutenant Governor to dissolve the Legislature.

Constituencies

The difficult decisions surrounding an election are not all made by voters. One of these decisions is how to divide the province into voting districts, or constituencies, each of which has one MLA. Currently there are 87 constituencies, representing over 4 million Albertans. Constituency boundary lines change every few years and are normally determined by a special body called the Electoral Boundaries Commission.

The Electoral Boundaries Commission is made up of a chair appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council and four members (commissioners) appointed by the Speaker, two on the recommendation of the Premier and two on the recommendation of the Leader of the Official Opposition in consultation with the other opposition leaders. A boundaries commissioner must have a thorough knowledge of electoral law combined with an understanding of the needs and wishes of constituents.

The commission draws the boundaries mainly on the basis of population but also considers common community interests, the geographical area, natural boundaries such as rivers, political boundaries such as county lines and city limits and other factors. Its decisions are guided by a law called the *Electoral Boundaries Commission Act*. When the commission changes boundaries, the changes must become law before they can take effect.

Running an Election

The complex task of running a provincial general election belongs to Elections Alberta, the office of the Chief Electoral Officer. This office must do the following:

- Divide constituencies into polling districts
- Hire enumerators to count the voters and returning officers to count the votes

- Make sure voting is conducted according to the rules
- Take care of all election paperwork
- Issue the official election results

First Past the Post

In Canadian elections winners are chosen through the single-member plurality system, or first past the post. In other words, the candidate winning the most votes in a constituency is the winner even if he or she received less than 50 per cent of the popular vote, which is the total number of votes cast. Another voting system used by some democracies is proportional representation, in which parties win seats according to the percentage of the total votes cast in their favour. There are many countries using this system, including Germany, Switzerland and Ireland.

In the past only men who were landowners could vote. Women's right to vote was recognized in Alberta in 1916 while First Nations didn't receive the right to vote in Alberta until 1965.

Political Parties

When a group of people have similar ideas about the major issues affecting people in a democratic society, they may form a political party with the goal to elect some of their people to office, giving them a better chance of putting their ideas into practice. Joining a political party can be an effective way for you to influence parties and politicians because your voice will be heard when policies are being formed or reviewed. In an election campaign, on the other hand, candidates concentrate on promoting policies that are already largely in place.

Young adults can get involved by joining a party's youth association. Information on party youth associations or provincial political parties in general is available from individual party headquarters. Contacts can be located through the white pages, on the Internet or through social media.

Alberta's major political parties are the Progressive Conservatives, the Alberta Liberals, the New Democrats and a recent addition, the Wildrose Alliance. The Progressive Conservatives and the Alberta Liberals have their roots in the 19th century, while the New Democratic Party was born in the 20th century. Some of these same parties are prominent in federal politics and also in the politics of other provinces.

Political parties begin the work of choosing candidates long before an election. Each party tries to select, or nominate, one candidate to run in each constituency. Candidates who don't belong to a political party are called independents.

Making Your Choice

You might want to vote for a candidate based strictly on individual qualifications. However, when you vote, you vote for both your candidate and for the party that candidate represents unless the candidate is running as an independent rather than as a member of a party. So when choosing a candidate in an election, listen not only to the candidate but also to the party leader. Party leaders will tell you what their party intends to do if they form a government while individual candidates may also focus on what they want for their constituencies.

Candidates go door to door during their campaigns. If they come to your door, don't be afraid to ask questions. In fact, people seeking public office will want you to ask questions. Remember that they are competing for your vote, and a chance to explain the wisdom of their party's policies is a chance to convince you to vote for them. In an election campaign the voter is supreme. Pick the issues that most concern you, and find out what your candidates and their parties plan to do about them.

If you don't get a chance to talk to candidates face to face, call their campaign headquarters. As well, when candidates or parties have previously held seats in the Legislative Assembly, you can find out how they handled issues in the past by reading copies of *Hansard*, which can be found on the Assembly's website, www.assembly.ab.ca, and is searchable by keyword. If you know the important details about an issue, your questions will be more to the point, and you will be better able to judge how much the candidates know about that particular issue and whether they are on your side. One of the best ways to find out about a party's election platform is to attend a public meeting of all the candidates in your constituency, where the candidates for one constituency get together to talk about issues and answer voters' questions. You might have a chance to hear how would-be MLAs would deal with your concerns and those of other people. If you miss the all-candidates' meeting, you may be able to take part in a phone-in program, watch candidates' panel discussions or read their statements on important issues in the paper.

The media are helpful sources of information about candidates and issues. Television, radio and newspapers all offer extensive coverage of election issues, the best of which involve the candidates themselves speaking on various matters. Most candidates now have websites and social media accounts to communicate and to interact directly with voters.

The final choice is yours to make on election day. Once you have asked questions, collected information and thought about the alternatives, you can go to your polling station ready to mark an X next to the name of your carefully chosen candidate. Alberta is divided into 87 constituencies. One Member of the Legislative Assembly represents each constituency, and that Member represents everyone within the

constituency's boundaries, regardless of how they voted in the last election or whether they voted at all.

Elections Alberta

If you are not sure which constituency you live in or which MLA represents you in the Assembly, please check with Elections Alberta.

> **Elections Alberta**
> #100, 11510 Kingsway Avenue
> Edmonton, Alberta T5G 2Y5
> E-mail: info@elections.ab.ca
> Phone: 780.427.7191
> Website: www.elections.ab.ca

You can also check the Legislative Assembly of Alberta website at www.assembly.ab.ca or call the Legislature information line at 780.427.2826.

You and Your MLA

Until the 1970s being a Member of Alberta's Legislative Assembly was for most a part-time job. Hours were long during sittings, but Members were able to hold other jobs when sessions were adjourned. Things have changed. The once part-time, sessional lawmaker has become a full-time MLA, facilitator, guest speaker, troubleshooter and goodwill ambassador. Modern communication, especially television and web streaming coverage of question period, and the increasing demand for governments to provide more and better services have transformed our MLAs' relationship to us and radically changed the nature of their jobs.

The Members of Alberta's first Legislative Assembly, 1906 (McKay Avenue School, seat of the Legislature 1906-12)[1]

Today we are more aware of the decisions our MLAs are making, and we want greater involvement in that decision-making. We want to tell them what we think, and we want them to listen to us. To be there for us 12 months of the year, today's MLAs have offices in their constituencies and may take calls at home at all hours of the day or night seven days a week. Gone is the part-time MLA. An MLA's job is now full-time and then some.

Serving the Constituency

First and foremost, MLAs represent their constituents, and to represent means, above all, to communicate. In the Assembly Chamber MLAs earn their living with their voices, making the views of their constituents known by introducing Bills and debating and discussing concerns with other Members. To represent you in the Assembly, your MLA communicates your concerns to other elected Members and to various government ministries.

But that is only a small part of your MLA's role as your representative. MLAs perform most of their duties in their constituencies, out of sight of cameras and reporters. Here they earn their living with their ears, listening to the problems, questions, ideas and opinions of the people who elected them.

Who Is Represented?

If you are not eligible to vote, if you are eligible to vote but didn't vote in the last election or if you did vote and your candidate was defeated, you may wonder whether your MLA would even represent you if you had a concern. In fact, MLAs represent all of their constituents.

[1] Photo: Courtesy of Provincial Archives of Alberta

Whether you are a farmer wondering about crop insurance, a businessperson wanting to expand, a senior citizen with a question about a pension or a worker applying for workers' compensation benefits, your MLA is willing to help you. MLAs from other constituencies may also be able to assist you. Often their role is simply to direct you to the people most qualified to deal with your concern, but your MLA may even become an advocate for you if your own attempts to solve a problem have been unsuccessful. MLAs also deal with special-interest groups. Do you belong to a group concerned about the environment, child care, health, impaired or distracted driving, education or any other important issue? Your group may want to meet with your MLA, who may take up your cause by proposing a new law or resolution in the Assembly or by writing a letter to a government ministry.

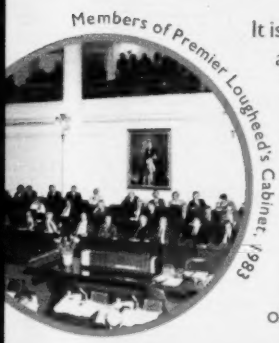
If you live in a rural area or constituency, your MLA may drive as many as 80,000 kilometres a year just getting around in your constituency and from the constituency to the Legislature. Rural Albertans expect their MLAs to be part of the communities they serve, attending graduations, anniversary celebrations and public events. Rural MLAs also meet with officials from municipalities, improvement districts, school and hospital boards, chambers of commerce and so on. Urban MLAs get together with individual Albertans and various organizations as well, both to seek their advice and to help them. While urban MLAs don't travel as far to keep in touch with their constituents, they usually have more people to represent. In addition to meeting with their constituents, MLAs spend time becoming informed about matters of public interest, preparing speeches and going to meetings to talk about policies and issues.

Taking a Stand

Of course, no MLA can agree with all constituents because people's opinions are never unanimous. MLAs often have to take sides, and which side they take depends on party platforms, constituents' points of view and the MLAs' personal beliefs.

MLAs try to determine how most people feel about a given issue. Through public meetings, day-to-day contact and local media forums MLAs gather information from as many constituents as possible. They then discuss the issue in private meetings, called caucus meetings, with other MLAs from the same party. The caucus members decide as a group what their party's position will be. Voting in the Legislature tends to be along party lines, according to what the caucus decided beforehand; however, a number of parliamentary reforms enacted in 1993, one of them allowing free votes on some Bills and motions, means that Members may vote as they see fit rather than according to their caucus's position. If some MLAs feel that the caucus's position does not reflect what their constituents want or that it would not be beneficial to their constituencies, they can and sometimes do speak against the position of their caucus.

Your MLA as a Cabinet Minister



It is not uncommon for constituents to contact Cabinet Ministers as well as their own MLAs. Because Cabinet Ministers are MLAs in charge of specific government ministries, they are in a position to influence ministry policies and programs. Ministers may remain as Ministers but not MLAs when the House has been dissolved for an election. As well as representing you, Ministers are ultimately responsible for whatever their ministries do. The Minister of Energy, for example, must answer to constituents as well as deal with all matters related to that portfolio. Below is a partial list of people whom the Energy Minister might have to deal with.

- Technical staff in the Department of Energy, the Alberta Utilities Commission and the Alberta Energy Regulator
- Natural gas, oil, electricity, mineral and petrochemical developers, producers and retailers
- Transporters of energy (e.g., pipelines, electrical transmission)
- Environmental and other nongovernment organizations
- Advocates of alternative energy sources
- Technical experts in industry and academia
- Committees and other groups formed to address energy matters
- MLAs from opposition parties, particularly the critics of the Energy department
- Energy and mining representatives from federal, provincial or territorial and municipal governments
- People in the energy field from other countries
- Representatives from the media
- Individual consumers and taxpayers from across the province

Keeping in touch with these as well as other groups and individuals helps the Minister to develop energy policies that maximize the benefit of energy and mineral resources to the province and make the best use of ministry funds.

Your MLA as a Private Government Member

Private government Members are often called backbenchers because in the Assembly they sit in the back rows, behind the Cabinet Ministers. However, the correct term for any Member who is not in cabinet is private Member. A private government Member is a private Member who belongs to the governing party.

Like other MLAs, the private government Member is there to hear your concerns and try to act on them. He or she has the additional advantage of belonging to the same party as the Cabinet Ministers, who of course play a key role in determining programs and policies.

Historically Alberta has been a province of landslide election victories for the winning party. As a result, governing parties of the past have had a large number of private government Members, whose role in the Assembly was limited to supporting decisions made by Ministers. Recently, however, these private Members have had a greater part in both the Assembly and all-party standing and select special committees. They sit on government and legislative committees and even sponsor government Bills other than money Bills (that is, Bills that have the approval of cabinet before being introduced and, therefore, a good chance of passing and becoming law). In addition, private government Members, as with opposition Members, may introduce their own Bills, called Private Members' Public Bills, and raise their constituents' concerns in the Legislature.

Your MLA in Opposition

You may also want to take your concern to an MLA from one of the opposition parties. The role of an opposition party is to criticize government activity, hold the government accountable, propose improvements and present itself to the public as an alternative to the party in office.

Opposition parties assign some of their MLAs to be critics of specific departments. Collectively opposition critics are called a shadow cabinet. For example, a resource development critic takes up problems with the Environment and Sustainable Resource Development Minister, suggesting alternative policies and development priorities and keeping energy policies in the public eye. You might see a resource development critic on the job if you watch Oral Question Period. Critics may have more than one Minister to shadow and would have to be familiar with the policies, practices and plans of each ministry. Opposition critics, like the Ministers they shadow, hear concerns and ideas from various persons and interest groups from anywhere in the province.

Your MLA in Committee

MLAs also serve on various committees. Committees of the Legislative Assembly are made up of MLAs from all parties. During session the whole Assembly (all MLAs) meets as a committee to study the details of proposed laws and spending programs.

Standing Committees of the Assembly

MLAs may also be part of smaller committees studying more specific issues. Standing committees of the Assembly involve MLAs from all parties represented in the Assembly. Citizens may attend their meetings in person, listen to proceedings online and access transcripts of their proceedings on the Assembly's website, www.assembly.ab.ca.

The chair of each standing or special committee presents a report to the Assembly. Reports usually include what the committee found and what they would like the Assembly to do. The Assembly does not have to do what a report recommends, but if it does, the government introduces a Bill or motion containing the recommendations. Descriptions of the eight standing committees and one special standing committee of the Legislature follow.

- **Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund** | Is responsible for reviewing the fund's business plan, monitoring its quarterly performance, holding meetings with the public to report on investment performance, and ensuring that the mission of the fund is being fulfilled.

- **Legislative Offices** | Meets throughout the year to discuss the budgets and other aspects of six legislative offices.
  - The Auditor General monitors government spending.
  - The Ombudsman responds to concerns about how citizens have been treated by government agencies.
  - The Chief Electoral Officer conducts elections.
  - The Ethics Commissioner helps MLAs avoid conflicts of interest.
  - The Information and Privacy Commissioner deals with concerns related to providing information under the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.
  - The Child and Youth Advocate represents the rights and interests of Alberta children and youth receiving intervention services.

- **Public Accounts** | Meets regularly during session and may also meet outside of session. This watchdog committee reviews government spending for the previous year and questions Cabinet Ministers about these expenditures.

- **Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing** | Meets when the Assembly refers an issue to it. This committee deals mainly with matters of privilege. Privilege means the rights Members have because they are MLAs such as the right to express a controversial view in the Assembly without being sued or prosecuted. In addition, the committee keeps the standing orders up to date and may recommend changes to them. This committee is essentially a House rules committee.

- **Private Bills** | Meets during session to consider all private Bills before the Assembly. A private Bill is a Bill brought forward by an individual or group that affects only that individual or group. The committee discusses each Bill and recommends whether the Assembly should pass it or not.

- **Members' Services** | There is also a Special Standing Committee on Members' Services, which sets Members' salaries, pensions and benefits and discusses related administrative matters.

Legislative Policy Committees

Some of the standing committees are legislative policy committees, which are set up to examine particular issues. At present there are three legislative policy committees.

- **Families and Communities** | Its mandate relates to Health, Human Services, Justice and Solicitor General, Culture, Education, and Service Alberta.

- **Alberta's Economic Future** | Its mandate relates to the areas of Agriculture and Rural Development, International and Intergovernmental Relations, Enterprise and Advanced Education, and Tourism, Parks and Recreation.

- **Resource Stewardship** | Its mandate relates to the areas of Environment and Sustainable Resource Development, Transportation, Municipal Affairs, Treasury Board and Finance, Aboriginal Relations, and Energy.

Members of the Assembly's standing committees are appointed on the second day of a new Legislature for the duration of the life of that particular Legislature.

Special Committees of the Assembly

Special committees are appointed by the Assembly to deal with special issues that may come up only once. Like standing committees, special committees are made up of MLAs from all parties represented in the Assembly. Two examples follow.

- **Select Special Conflicts of Interest Act Review Committee** | This is an all-party committee consisting of 11 Members. The Select Special Conflicts of Interest Act Review Committee was struck in December 2012 and has been tasked with reviewing the *Conflicts of Interest Act*. The committee must submit to the Legislative Assembly of Alberta, within one year after beginning the review, a report that includes any amendments recommended by the committee.

- **Select Special Lobbyists Act Review Committee** | This committee was established in 2011 to fulfill the legislated requirement to conduct a comprehensive review of the *Lobbyists Act* and submit to the Legislative Assembly, within a year after the beginning of the review, a report that included amendments to the Act recommended by the committee.

Your Participation Is Vital

You must do your part so that your MLA can represent you effectively. One of your obligations as a constituent is to be informed. Not every issue will interest you, of course, but if a policy or issue is important to you, learn as much as you can about it before approaching your MLA. Sometimes just unearthing basic facts can help you come up with ideas or solutions. MLAs rely on their constituents for information and ideas.

Public meeting hosted by the Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund, Edmonton, 2013

If you really want to get involved at the policy-making level, join a political party. Contacts can be located through the white pages, on the Internet, or through social media. Although parties are most visible during an election campaign, you can join at any time. And, remember, all MLAs began their careers as ordinary party members trying to make a difference in how our province is governed.

Your vote is critical, but before casting your ballot in an election, find out as much as you can about each candidate's position so that you can choose the one who most closely reflects how you feel about issues that are important to you. Even if you don't contact your MLA or work for a political party, voting is an important contribution to the democratic process.

Getting in Touch

If you need to find out who your MLA is, check your telephone directory under Government of Alberta or call either Elections Alberta at 780.427.7191 or the Legislature information line at 780.427.2826. They will let you know your MLA's name, address and telephone number. This information is also easily accessed online at www.assembly.ab.ca.

If you decide to write to your MLA, state your question or concern as completely as you can. You may also telephone your MLA at his or her constituency or Legislature office during regular office hours as well as write or phone the appropriate Cabinet Minister or opposition critics.

MLAs strive to be available, accessible and accountable to their constituents. They can reach these objectives through open communication with you, the constituent.

Executive Council

When we speak of the government, we really mean Executive Council; that is, the Premier and Cabinet Ministers. Like other forms of government, our parliamentary system has three branches: the legislative, the executive and the judicial. The legislative branch makes laws, the executive puts them into force, and the judicial applies them through the courts. Executive Council is the executive branch.

A Complex Role

Whether during a session of the Legislative Assembly or at other times of the year Executive Council's job is to put government policies into practice. In doing so, Ministers work with their caucus, with other Ministers or individually. Throughout the year they discuss policy, consider new laws and work on budget estimates. Individually they are ministry heads, developing department programs and ensuring that the laws administered by their ministry are enforced. During a session of the Legislative Assembly Ministers are involved in the Assembly's business as well, introducing and debating Bills and answering questions about the work of their ministries. Ministers present business plans and budgets for all areas of responsibility within their ministries, and each Minister presents budget estimates for the approval of the whole Legislative Assembly.

Students participating in Mr. Speaker's MLA for a Day program learn the value of citizen participation

Policy-making

Executive Council sponsors the new laws and programs that put government policies into action, but every Member of the government caucus has a hand in deciding what those policies will be. Policy development begins in the constituencies. MLAs monitor public opinion on an issue and decide their policies based on the wishes of their constituents and the philosophy of the party they belong to.

To see how policy-making works, let's look at an example. Meeting long-term health care needs is an important issue today, one that raises many questions. Would people needing long-term care rather be in hospitals or at home? What type of care is most cost effective? Most practical? Questions such as these must be considered before the government can decide on a policy, and they cannot be answered without outside advice. Members from the governing party sit on Legislative Assembly committees and government committees with fellow MLAs.

From Policy to Action: Law-making

One way of putting policies into action is by passing new laws. If, for example, the government caucus decides that people requiring long-term care should remain at home as much as possible, the cabinet might draft a proposed law, or Bill, establishing guidelines to regulate home-care services. The caucus would then go over the draft and suggest changes or even a rewrite. Although MLAs debate and pass Bills only when the Assembly is in session, Ministers and caucus work year-round planning them.

The Honourable Alison Redford, Premier of Alberta, addresses the Assembly, 2013

When the government caucus has approved a Bill, a Cabinet Minister or occasionally a private government Member introduces it in the Legislative Assembly.

Bills must receive three readings and be granted royal assent before they can become law (see Making Alberta's Laws). When the governing party has a majority of seats in the Assembly, the passage of government Bills is virtually assured.

From Policy to Action: Programs and the Budget

Another way policies become reality is through programs developed by government ministries, which are headed by Ministers. For example, if the long-term health care policy called for more at-home care, Ministers involved would develop programs that promoted this policy. One program might encourage health care workers to enter the home-care field while another might help pay for medical supplies used in the home.

Ministries—departments and other agencies that report to a Minister— receive funding authorization to deliver their programs. There is always more public demand for programs than our tax dollars can pay for. Ministers must choose what they feel are the most useful and cost-effective programs for their departments. Treasury Board, a committee of Cabinet Ministers chaired by the President of the Treasury Board, reviews the government's fiscal plan and ministry budgets. Some issues are also reviewed by cabinet and government caucus. Approved programs are included in the ministry's budget. The Legislative Assembly then debates each ministry's budget and votes on each department's budget.

As ministry heads, as committee members and as lawmakers, Cabinet Ministers help develop and put into practice the policies that affect our daily lives. As elected Members of the Legislative Assembly they must also listen to Albertans, and their policies must reflect what Albertans want.

3. Rules and Traditions

Symbols and Ceremonies: The Mace and the Black Rod

The Mace, the ceremonial staff the Sergeant-at-Arms carries into the Chamber each sitting day, is the symbol of the Speaker's authority and, therefore, the authority of the Assembly. When the Assembly is sitting, the Sergeant-at-Arms places the Mace on the table with the orb and cross facing the government side of the Chamber. When the Speaker leaves the Chair and the Assembly sits as a committee of the whole House, the Mace is moved to brackets on the underside of the table. Although the Mace has no constitutional significance, it is important as a symbol because the Assembly cannot conduct its business unless the Mace is present.

The Medieval Mace

Like so many other features of the Legislative Assembly, the Mace has a history going back to medieval England, where a battle mace referred to a metal club with a spiked head. Along with lances and swords the battle mace was used as a lethal weapon by mounted warriors as its spikes and blades could penetrate armour.

Two kings of the 12th century, Richard I of England and Philip II of France, armed their bodyguards with maces, which were used both in battle and in royal ceremonies. Gradually the Mace became a symbol of the monarch's authority instead of a real weapon. As the Mace developed symbolic stature, its appearance changed accordingly. The spikes and other warlike apparatus were replaced by jewels, precious metals and other lavish decorations, and the royal coat of arms became the Mace's most important emblem. As a result, the coat of arms was made larger and moved from the bottom of the shaft to the top.

Symbol of the Assembly's Authority

The Mace appeared in the British Parliament as early as the 15th century although as an emblem of authority of royal Sergeant-at-Arms it was carried long before that. As the monarch's power decreased and Parliament's grew, the Mace became Parliament's symbol as well. The modern Mace thus represents the authority of a Parliament or Assembly as well as the monarch's.

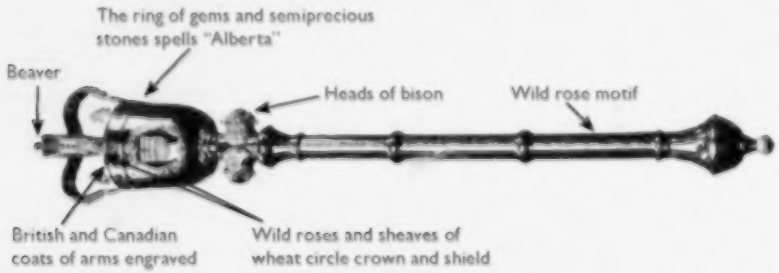
Both Britain and Canada have long recognized the symbolic importance of the Mace. In 1629 King Charles I of England attempted to shut down Parliament by demanding the surrender of the Mace. With the aid of Oliver Cromwell, who later became Lord Protector, the Mace was removed and Parliament was dismissed in 1653. In the 19th century the British House of Commons had to delay a daily sitting when the keys to the cupboard holding the Mace went missing. In Alberta the first Legislature was caught off guard just before its first sitting: there was no Mace. Because nobody so much as suggested that a sitting could be held without

it, Alexander Rutherford's Liberal government ordered the rush construction of one from Watson Brothers Jewelry of Calgary.

Watson Brothers hired Rufus E. Butterworth to create Alberta's first Mace, which he made entirely from scrap in only a few weeks' time. Its shaft was plumbing pipe, and it is rumoured to have been mounted on a toilet tank float. Ornamental decorations around the orb were made from old shaving mug handles, bits of an old bedstead and other scraps of wood. A piece of red velvet and a coat of gold paint provided the finishing touches, and the Mace was sent to Edmonton in time for the Legislature's March 15, 1906, opening ceremonies at the Thistle rink.

Remarkably, the makeshift Mace was used for 50 years. It was finally replaced on February 9, 1956, when the provincial employees' union presented a new Mace to the Legislative Assembly in honour of Alberta's 50th anniversary. A message engraved on the upper portion of the Mace reads, "The Civil Service Association of Alberta presented This Mace to the people of The Province of Alberta, to be Held in Trust by the Legislative Assembly, as an expression of Loyalty and in commemoration of Alberta's Golden Jubilee 1905–1955." Nevertheless, the first Mace came out of retirement to be carried into the Chamber on one day, March 15, 2006, to mark the 100th anniversary of the Assembly's first sitting.

The new Mace was designed by Lawrence B. Blain of Edmonton and built by the English silversmithing firm Joseph Fray Limited in Birmingham, England. The Mace is about three feet long and contains 200 ounces, or 5,669 grams, of sterling silver overlaid with gold. A figure of a beaver mounted on the traditional crown adorns the top of the Mace. Both the royal coat of arms and the Canadian coat of arms are displayed on the orb. Sheaves of wheat, representing Alberta's prairies, and wild roses, the floral emblem of Alberta, are engraved alternately on the crown. The headband of the crown features seven gems and semiprecious stones, the names of which spell the word "Alberta": amethyst, lazurite, bloodstone, emerald, ruby, topaz and agate. Two bison heads are positioned just below the orb of the Mace, which features the coat of arms of Alberta, and the shaft is decorated with wild roses and capped with a sheaf of wheat.


The ring of gems and semiprecious stones spells "Alberta"
Beaver
Heads of bison
Wild rose motif
British and Canadian coats of arms engraved
Wild roses and sheaves of wheat circle crown and shield

The Black Rod

Every Parliament has a Mace, but not all use a Black Rod. Alberta started using a Black Rod in 1991, but the tradition the Rod embodies is over 500 years old. One of the earliest references to the Black Rod dates back to 1361, when an usher carrying a black rod led processions which included King Edward III and Knights of the Order of the Garter. Further references from 1522, during the reign of Henry VIII, refer to the "Gentleman Usher" and his role in Parliament. Over time the Black Rod became the symbol of office for the Gentleman Usher of the Black Rod, the person responsible for security for the House of Lords.

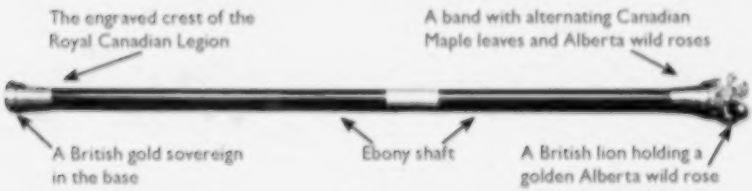
Sergeant-at-Arms Brian G. Hodgson carries the Black Rod as he escorts Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II from the Legislature Chamber, 2005

The Gentleman Usher in the United Kingdom today uses the Black Rod when escorting the Queen or the Queen's representative and knocks on the House of Commons' door three times to request the Assembly's permission to enter the Chamber and deliver royal messages, such as summoning the Members of the Commons to attend the Speech from the Throne. Permission to enter is granted through the Speaker.

Canada's Parliament also has a Black Rod and an Usher of the Black Rod, who is responsible for security in the Senate Chamber. Many provinces such as British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island have Black Rods, but not all of them are actively in use.

Prior to 1991 in Alberta a Cabinet Minister simply announced that the Lieutenant Governor would be entering the Chamber. Then the Lieutenant Governor and escorts walked through the doors unimpeded. In 1991 Alberta's Sergeant-at-Arms began using a Black Rod to knock on the Chamber doors and ask permission for the Lieutenant Governor to enter. Since then the Speaker has routinely permitted the Lieutenant Governor to come in. However, the ceremony emphasizes the Assembly's right to control its own proceedings and its own space, including even the right to exclude the Queen's representative. As the Black Rod is carried only when the Sergeant-at-Arms is escorting the Lieutenant Governor, a Governor General, a member of the Royal Family or the Sovereign, it is borne in lieu of a Mace to represent the authority vested in the Sergeant-at-Arms to ensure the security of person and process in the Chamber.

Alberta's original Black Rod was a simple length of hardwood dowelling painted black with brass clamped on both ends. The Assembly used it until January 27, 1998, when the Alberta-Northwest Territories Command of the Royal Canadian Legion presented the Legislative Assembly with a new, handcrafted Black Rod. The shaft was made from a piece of ebony given by the Parliament of Sri Lanka, and the 1905 British gold sovereign in the base was a gift of the Parliament of the United Kingdom. Sterling silver features include a British lion at the top holding a golden Alberta wild rose, with a band of alternate Canadian maple leaves and Alberta wild roses below. The base has the gold sovereign on the bottom and features the engraved crest of the Royal Canadian Legion. Robert Watt, the first Chief Herald for Canada, designed the Assembly's Black Rod, which was then crafted by Calgary master goldsmith Charles Lewton-Brain and engraved by retired Edmonton engraver John Vandenbrink.


The engraved crest of the Royal Canadian Legion
A band with alternating Canadian Maple leaves and Alberta wild roses
A British gold sovereign in the base
Ebony shaft
A British lion holding a golden Alberta wild rose

The Speaker

Each day the proceedings of the Legislative Assembly open when the Sergeant-at-Arms calls, "Order, order! Mr. Speaker!" and leads a procession into the Chamber. Following the Sergeant-at-Arms is the Speaker, wearing traditional parliamentary dress, including a tailcoat cut away in the front over a sleeveless vest and white court shirt with tabs and a black tricorne (three-cornered) hat covered with corded silk.[1] The Speaker takes the chair at the head of the Chamber and presides over the Assembly's daily business.

Like all other Members of the Legislative Assembly, Speakers are first elected to represent one of the province's constituencies. In order to be considered for the role of Speaker, a Member must be nominated by another Member. From those nominated a Speaker is then elected by secret ballot at the beginning of the first legislative session following a provincial election. Two deputies, the Deputy Speaker and the Deputy Chair of Committees are also elected at this time and in the same manner. The Deputy Speaker presides over the debates when the Speaker cannot be present and also serves as chair of the two committees of the whole Assembly. When neither the Speaker nor the Deputy Speaker are available, the role is assigned to the Deputy Chair of Committees. Once elected, Speakers become servants of the Assembly. In this role they must be impartial, and all MLAs must accept their authority.

Sergeant-at-Arms Brian G. Hodgson leads the procession for Honourable Ken Kowalski, Speaker of the Assembly, 2011

A Colourful Past

The history of Speakership dates back to the earliest parliaments of Britain. The first person to be called the Speaker was Sir Thomas Hungerford in 1377. The Speaker's job was to advise Parliament of the monarch's wishes and, in turn, to advise the monarch of Parliament's resolutions. If these resolutions angered the monarch or threatened the monarchy's power, the monarch could remove the Speaker from office or have the Speaker executed. In parliamentary history no fewer than nine Speakers were executed because of what they considered to be the performance of their public duties. Historians speculate that the original purpose of the opening procession was to provide Speakers with bodyguards to protect them from harm as they entered the Assembly Chamber.

The modern parliamentary system reflects the history and traditions of electing a new Speaker. Today the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition "force" a newly elected Speaker to the chair, seemingly against his or her will.

[1] As the traditions of parliamentary democracy developed, so too did the attire of the Speaker. By the end of the 18th century the Speaker's official attire differed significantly from that of the Members and was based on court dress, including the wearing of the black silk tricorne hat.

Although early Speakers in Britain were the mouthpieces of Parliament, they were not always the servants of Parliament as they are now. In fact, the first Speakers were appointed by the monarch, not by Parliament. The Speaker's role changed as the parliamentary system evolved. Parliament first came into being because the nobility resented being taxed and having no control over how the monarch spent their money. Over many centuries monarchs empowered Parliament, particularly the House of Commons, to levy taxes, spend tax dollars and make laws.

Because of that shift of power the Speaker's loyalty gradually shifted from the monarch to the House of Commons. In 1629 King Charles I ordered Speaker Sir John Finch to adjourn a session of the House. When Speaker Finch rose to obey the King's order, angry Members of Parliament tried to force him to remain in the chair, reminding him that he was supposed to be their servant, not the King's.

Speaker Finch and Charles I won that dispute and dissolved Parliament, but 13 years later, when England was on the verge of civil war, Charles barged into the Chamber and demanded the surrender of five Members opposed to his policies. Speaker William Lenthall refused, saying, "I have neither eyes to see nor tongue to speak in this place but as the House is pleased to direct me, whose servant I am here." He was telling the King in no uncertain terms that the Speaker served Parliament and Parliament only. That moment was a turning point in the history of Parliament for it helped to establish the Speaker's independence from the Crown. By the end of the 17th century the Speaker was an appointee of Parliament and not of the monarch.

Alberta's Speakers

The Speaker is elected by secret ballot on the first sitting day of each new Legislature. Since the Speaker represents the Assembly, he or she must serve all MLAs equally, no matter what party they belong to. This means that in the Assembly Chamber the Speaker

- Ensures that all MLAs follow parliamentary rules as they ask or answer questions, debate or vote
- Gives all MLAs a fair chance to speak
- Ensures that the special rights and privileges of Members and of the Assembly as a whole are protected
- Cannot take part in debate, ask or answer questions during Oral Question Period or vote except to break a tie

The Honourable Gene Zwozdesky, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, presides over debate in the Chamber, 2013

The Speaker is also the head of the Legislative Assembly Office (LAO), which provides a range of services to all MLAs. These include office support for MLAs in their constituencies and at the Legislature, legal and procedural advice, and

programs to help MLAs serve their constituents and do the Assembly's business efficiently (see The Legislative Assembly Office). As head of the Legislative branch the Speaker also has the enjoyable task of receiving official guests of the province such as High Commissioners, ambassadors and consuls general.

Because the Speaker represents the Legislative Assembly, Members must show the Speaker the same respect they would show the Assembly as an institution. Therefore, Members must

- Respect the Speaker's rulings although they may ask the Speaker to explain the reasons for any decision
- Not enter or leave the Chamber while the Speaker is standing
- Not interrupt the Speaker
- Not pass between the Speaker and the Mace
- Address all comments in the Chamber to the Speaker, who is considered the Assembly's messenger to the Crown

The key characteristics of the Speakership are authority and impartiality. The Assembly grants the Speaker the authority to direct its debates and proceedings, and the Speaker does so without favouring MLAs from one political party over those from another.

Speakers of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Name	Dates of Office
Honourable Charles W. Fisher	1906–1919
Honourable Charles S. Pingle	1920–1921
Honourable Oran L. McPherson	1922–1926
Honourable George N. Johnston	1927–1935
Honourable N. Eldon Tanner	1936–1937
Honourable Peter Dawson	1937–1963
Honourable Arthur J. Dixon	1963–1972
Honourable Gerard J. Amerongen	1972–1986
Honourable David J. Carter	1986–1993
Honourable Stanley S. Schumacher	1993–1997
Honourable Kenneth R. Kowalski	1997–2012
Honourable Gene Zwozdesky	2012–

As the servant of the Assembly the Speaker represents the whole Assembly. The Speaker is also a vital link with parliaments and Legislatures across Canada and around the world. The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) is perhaps the most important vehicle for interaction with other parliamentarians. The CPA comprises elected members from over 175 parliaments. Alberta's Legislative Assembly is one branch of the CPA, and the current Speaker is president of the branch.

Parliamentary Procedure

Parliaments carry on their business according to unwritten traditions, conventions and written rules. These conventions and traditions have been handed down for many years by parliaments in both the United Kingdom and Canada, and they are the foundation for written rules that each individual Assembly devises.

Principles of Procedure

The principles of parliamentary procedure are set down in Canadian parliamentary law. The Constitution requires that Canadian parliaments be similar in overall form to the British Parliament. Our Legislative Assembly resembles the British House of Commons in that the government is formed by the party having the support of a majority of elected Members while the opposition is made up of MLAs from all other parties. The government introduces most of the Bills passed by the Assembly while the opposition criticizes government policies, proposed laws and spending plans and keeps them in the public eye. The government cannot remain in office unless it has the support of a majority in the Assembly.

This system can run smoothly only if two further principles are followed: the government must be able to get its business done, and the opposition must have ample opportunity to express its views. The rules and traditions of parliamentary procedure are designed to balance these two considerations. For example, on rare occasions opposition Members may debate a government Bill to the point of delaying its passage if they feel strongly that it does not serve the public good. This tactic is known as a filibuster. It gives the opposition extra time to try to put public pressure on the government. As a last resort the government can end the filibuster and thus pass its Bill by moving a motion to close debate, which is called time allocation.

The Constitution also calls for Canada's adoption of British parliamentary traditions. The most important of these is parliamentary privilege, which means that Members of an Assembly have certain privileges that are necessary for them to do their job such as freedom of speech. Members cannot be sued or prosecuted for what they say in the Assembly even if they say something defamatory.

Members can raise a question of privilege if they feel that their privileges are not being respected or that another Member has abused a privilege; for example, by slandering a fellow Member. If the Speaker thinks a breach of privilege may have taken place, the Assembly may turn the matter over to a committee or take action itself to discipline the offender.

Written Rules and Unwritten Traditions

Every day the Assembly meets at a specific time, business is carried on in a certain order and Members follow precise rules in their debates. Meeting times, the order of business and the rules of debate are contained in the standing orders, which are the written rules drafted by the Legislative Assembly. Although all rules must follow accepted parliamentary practice, they can be written to suit the needs of a particular Assembly. Standing orders cover most of the questions of procedure that might come up in the Assembly, and they are the main authority on managing its business.

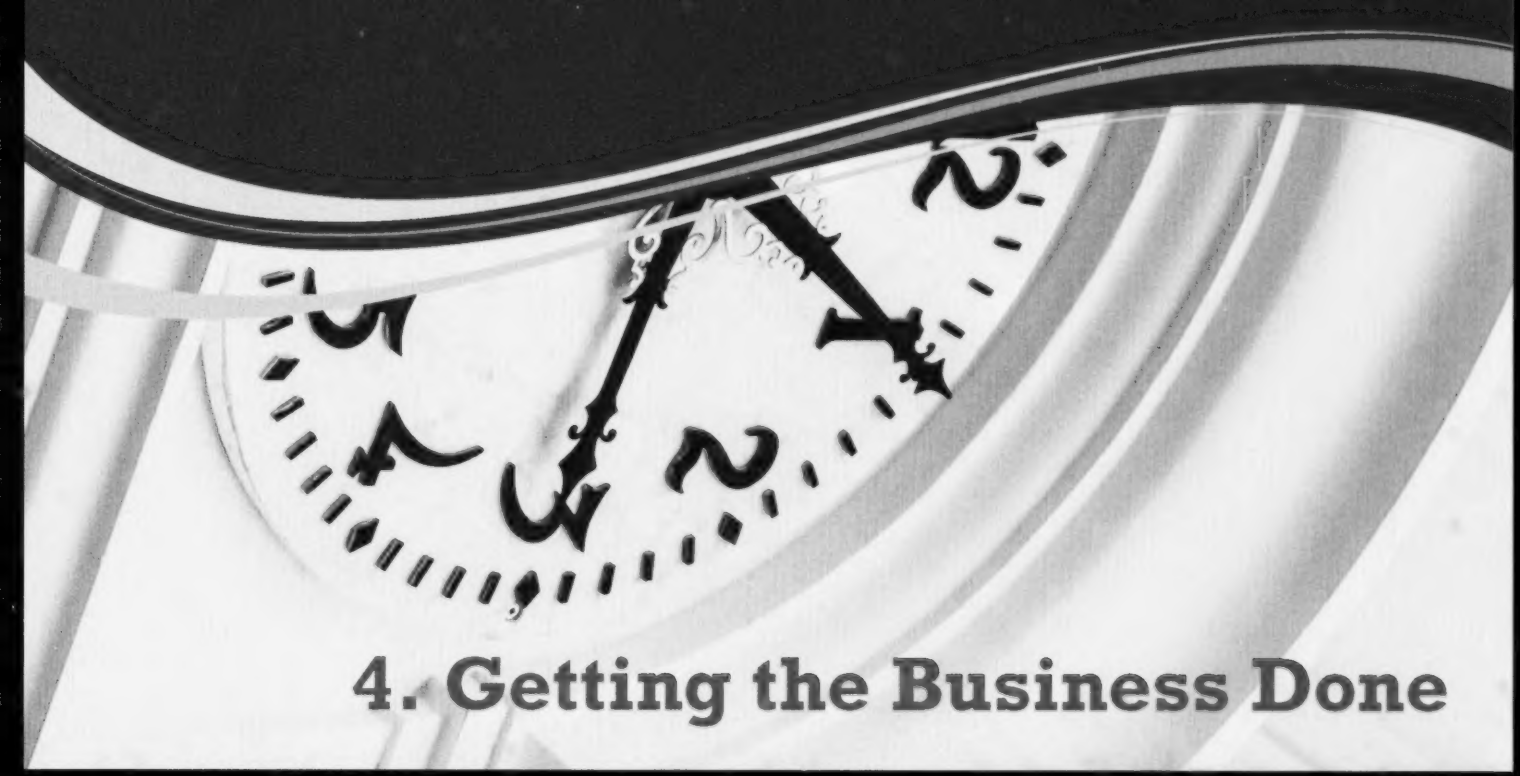
Just as vital to the way the Assembly works are the unwritten rules, based on the traditions, customs and practices of Alberta's Legislative Assembly and the Canadian and British Parliaments. These past practices are called precedents, and if a problem comes up in the Assembly that isn't covered in the standing orders, the Speaker may use precedents as a guide to making a ruling. Examples of precedents are collected in three books used by members and by the Speaker every sitting day: *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, *Beauchesne's* Parliamentary Rules & Forms and *Erskine May's Treatise on The Law, Privileges, Proceedings and Usage of Parliament*.

The Speaker's Rulings

The Speaker may rule a Member out of order for breaking the Assembly's rules during debate or Oral Question Period or decide whether a Member may have abused parliamentary privilege. Speakers' past rulings on these and other matters form the precedents that guide modern parliamentary practice.

Since times change in parliaments as well as in everyday life, the Speaker must interpret and apply the traditions of former Assemblies to today's circumstances. For example, it is customary that Members' language must not offend the dignity of the Legislative Assembly, but the meaning of "offensive" changes over the years and is different to different people. In 19th-century Ottawa a Member could not call another Member "a bag of wind" or accuse anyone of "talking twaddle," but such phrases are now old fashioned and probably would not even be used. More recently, Alberta Speakers have ruled that a Member may not call a fellow Member a "coward," a "halfwit" or a "liar." Because Speakers base their rulings on both historical and current practices and because standing orders are adapted to individual Assemblies, parliamentary procedure is dynamic rather than rigid, keeping its ties to the past yet working effectively in the present. The traditional principles of procedure are maintained even though specific rules and their interpretations are always changing.

Speakers make rulings every sitting day, ranging from reminders to Members not to speak out of turn to complex questions of parliamentary privilege. Each ruling is based on the rules and traditions of past parliaments, and each in turn may influence how future Speakers interpret the rules of procedure.



4. Getting the Business Done

How the Assembly Works

Although many people think Oral Question Period is typical of the work of the Legislative Assembly, it is only a small part of our Legislature's daily business. If you were to visit the public gallery to watch Members of the Assembly in action in the Chamber below or view the entire proceedings online, you would discover that the legislative process is a very complex one.

Opening day of session, 2009

This chapter outlines the pattern of an entire session and then describes the Assembly's daily affairs, from routine procedures to the main business items that MLAs debate and vote on in the Chamber.

A Session of the Legislature

Following a provincial election the Lieutenant Governor asks the leader of the party commanding a majority in the Legislative Assembly to form a government. Sometime later a royal proclamation calls the Assembly into session. The Assembly is in session at least once a year, usually in spring and resuming again in the fall. Since 2007 the Legislative Assembly of Alberta has produced a parliamentary calendar, which outlines the projected session dates for the calendar year.

The Lieutenant Governor reads the Speech from the Throne, outlining the government's plans for the session, on the opening day of each new session. Members then discuss the throne speech over the next several days in a wide-ranging debate about its perceived merits and flaws.

The Minister responsible for finance usually delivers the Budget Address, outlining the government's taxation and spending plans, within two weeks of the session's opening. Like the throne speech, the budget is criticized or praised in debate over subsequent days. The main estimates of departments stand referred to the legislative policy committees according to their respective mandates unless otherwise ordered. These committees review the estimates of the various departments. Once all estimates have been reviewed, a vote is held on the main estimates.

MLAs introduce Bills at first reading and then debate them in three stages: second reading, Committee of the Whole and third reading. Once a Bill has passed third reading, the Lieutenant Governor may grant royal assent, enabling the Bill to become law.

Prorogation formally ends the session. Generally, a motion or Bill still on the Assembly's agenda "dies on the Order Paper"; that is, it is no longer before the Assembly and must be reintroduced at the next session if members still wish it to be considered. However, a Member of Cabinet may move a motion to reinstate a Government bill to the same stage that the Bill stood at the time of prorogation.

The Daily Routine

During session the Legislative Assembly sits every afternoon from Monday through Thursday. The Assembly may also sit some evenings. Each day's afternoon sitting opens with the Speaker's procession, the prayer and the following routine procedures.

Introduction ofVisitors: MLAs introduce parliamentarians, diplomats and other official visitors to the Assembly.

Introduction of Guests: MLAs introduce groups of students and other visitors present in the galleries.

Ministerial Statements: Cabinet Ministers acknowledge special events or announce new policies, programs or directions for their ministries or the government as a whole.

Members' Statements: Up to six private Members make two-minute statements on a subject of concern to themselves or their constituents.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees: Chairs of all-party committees table reports in the Assembly under this item of business.

Presenting Petitions: Albertans concerned about any provincial issue may ask an MLA to present a petition to the Assembly. The Assembly must be formally petitioned to consider any private Bills.

Notices of Motions: Members usually place motions on the Assembly's daily written agenda. If they want to move a motion on short notice, they give oral notice of the motion during this part of the proceedings.

Introduction of Bills (first reading): MLAs introduce Bills proposing new laws or amendments to existing laws. Bills customarily pass first reading without debate.

Tabling Returns and Reports: Cabinet Ministers table their ministries' annual reports, reports by commissions and responses to written questions and motions for returns. Private Members also table documents.

Tablings to the Clerk: Documents may be tabled by providing the required number of copies to the Clerk.

Oral Question Period: For 50 minutes opposition MLAs and private government Members ask Cabinet Ministers questions about government activity.

The Assembly can make changes to the Routine to accommodate the wishes of the Members.

Orders of the Day: Government Business

If you visit the gallery when Members are debating government business, you can watch the government's plans unfold and listen to MLAs on both sides of the Assembly debate the pros and cons of the government's proposals. The decisions made at this time will affect you more than any other decisions made in the Assembly.

Government motions are not proposals for laws; they provide a means for the government to promote or clarify policies or set up special committees. Members may debate these motions.

Danielle Smith, Leader of the Official Opposition, during Oral Question Period, 2013

Government Bills propose the laws which, if passed, govern certain areas of our society. Before they are introduced, usually by a Cabinet Minister, these Bills are approved by the cabinet. Although they are sometimes amended, they nearly always pass because they are supported by the party commanding a majority in the Assembly. An example is the *Education Act*, which regulates our education system. Government Bills also include appropriation Bills, which are introduced by the Minister responsible for finance. These Bills request the Assembly to approve the government's spending of public funds. Government Bills are numbered from 1 to 199.

At certain stages of its business the whole Assembly meets as a committee to study government business in detail. The Committee of the Whole studies Bills, clause by clause if necessary, after they have passed second reading. The Committee of the Whole must approve all Bills before they can receive third reading. Bills can also be referred to legislative policy committees for more detailed consideration.

A chair, not the Speaker, heads both the Committee of the Whole and the Committee of Supply. If you happen to see the changeover from Assembly to committee, you will see that the Speaker leaves the Chamber and the Sergeant-at-Arms takes the Mace from the Assembly table and puts it on a bracket below. In the early days of the British Parliament the Speaker was usually close to the King and wasn't trusted to hear certain parts of Members' discussions.

Debating government business enables government Members to promote and explain their party's policies while opposition Members can point out what they feel to be the flaws in those same ideas and then make their own proposals. Although debate on motions and Bills may not be as exciting as Oral Question Period, listening to the Members' arguments is a good way to learn how political parties differ in their ideas about how Alberta should be governed.

The annual budget estimates are studied carefully by legislative policy committees according to their mandate unless otherwise ordered.

Orders of the Day: Private Members' Business

Every MLA who is not in cabinet is a private Member. Private Members propose Bills and motions, and these provide a forum for the Assembly to debate important issues and for opposition parties to promote their policies. If you pay close attention to motions and Bills presented by opposition Members, you will have a good idea of what to expect from them if they were to form a government in the future.

Private Members' motions ask the government to do something such as introduce a Bill or change a policy. These motions often pass although the government does not have to do what the motion asks.

Private Members' public Bills come up for debate every Monday. Like government Bills, they are proposals for laws, but unlike government Bills, they are sponsored by private Members from any party and do not have cabinet's formal approval. Private Members' public Bills do not always pass, but they do give Members a chance to propose policies and raise concerns in the public forum of the Assembly. Private Members cannot introduce Bills that require the government to spend public funds. These Bills are numbered 200 to 299.

Written questions are submitted to Cabinet Ministers by Members usually from opposition parties. They differ from oral questions in that they seek detailed information that Ministers would not have at their fingertips. When Ministers agree to answer written questions, they must provide either written or oral answers within a specified period of time. When a Minister refuses a written question, Members may debate the decision.

Motions for returns are requests, usually from opposition Members, for documents from Cabinet Ministers, often for detailed information on controversial issues. A Member might ask for minutes of meetings, agreements with private companies or detailed breakdowns of government actions in connection with plans for industrial development. Even though the governing party may defeat motions requesting material it does not want made public, debate on these motions allows opposition Members to criticize government actions and thereby try to gain public support.

Private Bills affect only the people or institutions named in them. Generally, they are sponsored by a private Member rather than a Cabinet Minister. A common example is a Bill to establish a foundation. The difficult areas of these Bills are dealt with by a committee before Members debate them in the Assembly, so debate is usually straightforward. These Bills are numbered Pr1, Pr2, and so on.

If you would like to know more about bringing a private Bill before the Assembly, contact the Parliamentary Counsel office at 780.422.4837.

Taking Part

Welcome Guests

Have you ever watched the Assembly's proceedings from one of the galleries? With more and more Albertans taking an active interest in the political life of the province, the galleries on both sides of the Chamber fill up quickly during a sitting of the Assembly. MLAs from all parties encourage their constituents to get a first-hand look at law-making in action.

But guests were not always welcome in the parliamentary Chambers, much less invited. In fact, in the early years of Parliament's history Members carefully guarded their right to keep proceedings secret. Anyone other than a Member who dared to venture into the Chamber during a sitting was called a "stranger" and was forcibly removed or even arrested. Needless to say, there was no press gallery like we have today. In fact, in 1738 the British Parliament passed a resolution declaring that "it is an high indignity to, and a notorious breach of the Privilege of, this House, for any News-Writer... [to give] any Account of the Debates, or other Proceedings of this House, or any Committee thereof."[1] Despite these rules being actively enforced, news writers continued to report debates and committee meetings even though some of them found themselves imprisoned in the Tower of London.

One of these news writers, and also an MP, was John Wilkes. In 1763 Wilkes wrote in a periodical called the *North Briton* that parts of a Speech from the Throne were untrue. He was arrested and became something of a hero in his struggle to have parliamentary reporting accepted. This resulted in the end of parliamentary secrecy, meaning that printed records would be kept and "strangers" could sit in the galleries and watch the proceedings. In 1780 the Speaker was asked to remove some strangers, but he replied that it was "the sense of the House that they should be admitted."[2] Today visitors to the galleries are considered not strangers but welcome guests, and when their MLA introduces them to the Assembly, they are greeted with enthusiastic thumping on all MLA desks.

Watching Alberta's political history unfold is an experience like no other. It's an opportunity to see what our elected representatives are doing and help us decide if they're doing the kind of job we want them to do. Of course, you may not be able to visit the Chamber to see MLAs in action, but there are many other ways you can become an informed citizen.

[1] William Cobbett, ed., *Cobbett's Parliamentary History of England*, vol. 10, (London: T.C. Hansard, 1812), April 13, 1738, col. 812, http://www2.odl.ox.ac.uk.

[2] William Cobbett, ed., *Cobbett's Parliamentary History of England*, vol. 21, (London: T.C. Hansard, 1814), May 18, 1780, col. 616, http://www2.odl.ox.ac.uk.

You can get the news about Alberta's political life by reading newspapers, listening to the radio or watching TV. Reporters gather the news every day from their special seats in the Chamber press gallery.

- You can read *Hansard*, the word-for-word account of everything the Members say in the Chamber, available on the Assembly website.
- You can call the Legislature information line at 780.427.2826. You can also visit the Assembly's website at www.assembly.ab.ca and access live audio and video of the proceedings.
- You can contact MLAs' offices or political party offices and ask them about their positions on various issues.

Petitions: A Collective Voice

A petition is a way for a group of people to appeal to authority for some kind of change or action. Petitions presented to the Legislative Assembly under Presenting Petitions must address issues that the Assembly can do something about. If you and your neighbours are concerned about parking bylaws, you would take your concern to your local government rather than to the Assembly because parking bylaws are made by local governments. If you want changes to national parks policies, you would have to take that issue to the federal level—that is, Members of Parliament—because it is ultimately in charge of national parks. But if you wanted to see a change in the *Education Act*, a provincial law, you could prepare a petition asking the Legislative Assembly to pass a Bill to amend the *Education Act*.

Your petition must be addressed to the Legislative Assembly, not to the government or just a few MLAs. It cannot be argumentative or opinionated, nor may it criticize any one person or group or be harshly worded. Finally, a petition may not ask the Assembly for something that requires public money. For example, you cannot petition for a new road in your area because tax dollars would have to be spent to build it. Your petition can, however, ask that less money be spent on something or that a program or service be made more efficient.

If you are unsure whether your petition is appropriate for the Assembly, your MLA can help you decide or even help you with the wording. The Assembly also has the booklet entitled *Guidelines for Submitting Petitions to the Legislative Assembly*, available online at www.assembly.ab.ca/pro/Petition_guide.pdf or from the Parliamentary Counsel office at 780.422.4837. Once you have collected all the signatures, you can ask your MLA to present your petition in the Assembly.

The form of all petitions must be approved by Parliamentary Counsel prior to being presented by a Member. All approved petitions are presented under the agenda item Presenting Petitions. It is not clear what effect petitions have on government policy, especially if the request goes against a major government policy or philosophy. In fact, asking for government action through petitions is less common than it used to be, partly because Oral Question Period is a quicker and more public means of

bringing up important issues. As well, Members asking questions in the Chamber have better access to Cabinet Ministers than do citizens presenting petitions. But perhaps when combined with other strong indications that most Albertans want the government to move in a certain direction on a certain issue, petitions can have the results you want them to have.

"My Question to the Minister..."

The best known part of the Assembly's agenda is Oral Question Period, which lasts for about 50 minutes. Question period gives private Members an opportunity to question the Premier or a Cabinet Minister about urgent and pressing matters concerning Ministers' areas of responsibility.

Question period today is an often lively exchange between private Members and Cabinet Ministers. It is so lively, in fact, that in both the United Kingdom and Canada it is highly publicized and usually overshadows other equally important workings of Parliament. But just as visitors have not always been welcome in the Chamber, questions that might put Ministers on the spot were not always part of parliamentary procedure.

On February 9, 1721, Earl Cowper of the House of Lords asked the Earl of Sunderland the first recorded oral question, about an investment scheme that had gone awry. At that time Members could speak in the House only when moving or debating a motion, and Mr. Cowper's question was an unwelcome departure from form. Oral questions raised a stir in the British Parliament for the next hundred years. In 1783 Speaker Cornwall cautioned that question time should not lapse into "conversation," lest the House become disorderly. He felt that Members should recognize oral questions as a "deviation from the general rule... to be adopted with great care, sobriety, and prudence, because otherwise it might put the House out of temper, and prove a source of much inconvenience."[3] In 1805 the Lord High Chancellor, Lord Eldon, declared oral questions to be "inconsistent with... order and regularity."[4]

But oral questions also had their defenders. In 1808, at Westminster, Speaker Abbot called them "a most convenient usage" for getting the House's business done.[5] Most Members seem to have agreed with him. By 1833 the right of British Members of Parliament to question Ministers in the House was firmly entrenched, and in 1869 the first reference to questions appeared on the Order Paper. By 1900 both oral and written questions were accepted as part of the House's business.

[3] William Cobbett, ed., *Cobbett's Parliamentary History of England*, vol. 23, (London: T.C. Hansard, 1814), June 2, 1783, col. 925, http://www2.odl.ox.ac.uk.

[4] *Hansard Parliamentary Debates*, 1st series (1803-20), vol. 3, February 15, 1805, col. 480, http://hansard.millbanksystems.com.

[5] *Hansard Parliamentary Debates*, 1st series (1803-20), vol. 10, March 16, 1808, col. 1171, http://hansard.millbanksystems.com.

In fact, Members that year asked 41 questions per day on average whereas they had only asked 129 for the entire session of 1847.

Question period is the modern way of petitioning a Parliament. As question periods have gained in importance in Commonwealth parliaments, petitions have declined.

For information on session hours
please refer to the Legislative Assembly of Alberta
website at www.assembly.ab.ca or
call the Legislature Information Line 780.427.2826

Making Alberta's Laws

Have you ever wondered where highway speed limits or seat belt laws come from? The laws that say how fast we can drive or whether we have to wear seat belts are made by the people we elect to the Legislative Assembly.

The Members of the Legislative Assembly meet every spring and in the fall. Most of their time during these sessions is spent deciding how taxpayers' money will be spent and what laws will be passed since the government must introduce a new budget each year and pass new laws or change old ones.

Alberta's Laws Begin with You

Because we elect our MLAs and pay them with our taxes, they are really working for us, and our ideas help them decide what laws to pass. For example, on November 29, 2001, the Legislature passed a law requiring people under the age of 18 to wear a helmet while riding a bicycle. However, if such a law was not in place and you wanted it to be, you could take your request to the MLA for your constituency, or you and other supporters of an adult helmet law might even arrange to meet with the relevant Cabinet Ministers such as the Minister of Transportation or the Minister of Health.

If the Members or Cabinet Ministers you contact are convinced that most of their constituents want an adult helmet law and that such a law would be beneficial, they would meet as a group, or caucus, with the other Members of their party and with department staff to work out the details of the proposed law. Should there be special exemptions to the law for people such as Sikhs and others who wear turbans as part of their religion? If adults refuse to wear them, should they be fined? When caucus Members have resolved questions such as these, the proposed law, or Bill, can be drafted. A Bill may propose an entirely new law or change an existing one.

Bills are divided into three main types: government Bills, private Members' public Bills and private Bills. For a detailed description of the types of Bills see How the Assembly Works.

How a Bill Becomes Law

Members introduce Bills in the Assembly at Introduction of Bills, which is actually first reading. The term "reading" comes from the early days of the British Parliament, when printing was not very common. At that time someone read the whole Bill aloud in the House. Now the Clerk reads only the title, and first reading means that the Bill is formally introduced in the Assembly. After first reading Members study the Bill and decide whether to support all of it or just some parts of it or oppose it altogether.

The next stage of the Bill is second reading, in which Members debate the principle of the Bill. If a Bill would require adult cyclists to wear helmets, for example, Members may discuss only whether they support the idea of requiring adults to wear bicycle helmets, not whether they agree with the details such as the safety features of the helmet.

Debate of Bills is sometimes heated and has to be controlled. This is the Speaker's job. The Speaker keeps the debate running as smoothly as possible while giving all Members a fair chance to speak. When Members have finished debate on second reading, the Speaker calls a vote. If the Bill passes this stage, it then goes to the Committee of the Whole (see How the Assembly Works), where it is looked at in detail, clause by clause if necessary, and sometimes amended. Committee of the Whole consists of MLAs meeting as a committee with a chair rather than as an Assembly with a Speaker. Amendments may come about here as a result of points raised in debate or concerns expressed by constituents. When the Committee of the Whole has finished debating the Bill, the chair informs the Speaker that the Committee of the Whole has discussed the Bill and whether it has approved the Bill with any amendments.

The final stage of a Bill's journey through the Assembly is third reading. Again Members have a chance to comment on, criticize or ask questions about the Bill before voting on it for the last time.

Voting is by simple majority. If a Bill fails to pass any one of these stages, it cannot become law and must be reintroduced, usually not until the next session of the Legislature. Most government Bills pass because the governing party normally has majority support in the Assembly. Because they do not enjoy the same degree of support, most private Members' Bills do not get past second reading. However, sometimes even government Bills do not reach the final stages. This may be an indication that the government did not intend the Bill to pass but was instead trying to get a feel for public opinion on the issue the Bill addresses. In that case the Bill may be amended and introduced in a later session or dropped altogether and rewritten. In other instances public opposition to the Bill may cause the government to withdraw it.

Filibuster and Time Allocation

The filibuster is a tactic opposition Members use to delay a government Bill if they object to it particularly strongly. The word comes from the Spanish *filibustero*, meaning "freebooter." In the 17th century a *filibustero* could be one of the pirates who invaded the West Indies, and in the mid-19th century he could be an American adventurer trying to start a revolution in Cuba or Nicaragua. But in spite of this romantic beginning the word "filibuster" now usually means delaying tactics in an Assembly, a definition that was first recorded in the United States in 1882.

Under the current rules of debate Members may speak on a Bill once at each stage of debate and may speak once to every amendment and subamendment (an amendment to the amendment). At second reading debate is limited to a discussion of the overall principle, so the possibilities for amendment, and thus for extra speaking time, are very limited. To slow the Bill's journey through the Assembly at this stage, opposition Members may introduce a motion that the Bill "be not now read a second time" for a particular reason. This is called a reasoned amendment, and the reason usually given is that the Bill represents a major detriment to the public interest. Another second reading amendment is that a Bill be subject to a "six months' hoist," which would put it on hold for six months to give Members a chance to study it more closely. Similar delaying tactics can be used at third reading. If such an amendment to the motion for second or third reading were to pass, it would have the effect of halting further progress on the Bill. Although there is no vote on the Bill itself, it would "disappear" from the Order Paper.[6]

In Committee of the Whole, Members have the greatest opportunity to stall the passage of a Bill. At this stage Members study the Bill clause by clause, and they can propose an amendment for every clause as well as several subamendments. The governing party can counter the filibuster through a measure called time allocation, in which the government moves a motion to limit time for debate. Both filibuster and time allocation are used sparingly. On the one hand the opposition doesn't want to appear to be needlessly obstructionist, and on the other hand the government doesn't want to appear heavy handed.

If the Bill passes all stages in the Assembly and Committee of the Whole, the Lieutenant Governor approves it on behalf of the Queen. We call this stage royal assent. Centuries ago English monarchs passed laws by decree, but they gave up that right very early in the development of parliamentary democracy. By the time of Henry VII—that is, late in the 15th century—monarchs accepted that Parliament had the right to make laws, so they approved them almost routinely. But even as Parliament gained more power over the years, it still needed the monarch's consent for its Bills to become law. That tradition continues in our Legislative Assembly. Only when a Bill receives royal assent does it become an Act of the Legislature and part of the law of the land.

[6] Audrey O'Brien and Marc Bosc, eds., *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, 2nd ed., (Ottawa: House of Commons, 2009), 746-50.

Proclamation

Although all Bills become law when they have received royal assent, they do not necessarily come into force at that time. A Bill may specify that it comes into force on proclamation. This means that even though it has been passed, it will not become law until it is proclaimed formally by the Lieutenant Governor or, in reality, by the cabinet. Proclamations may be used if a Bill is to come into effect at a date after royal assent or if different parts of a Bill are to come into effect at different times. If a Bill does not specify when it comes into force, it does so upon royal assent.

Sometimes it's not realistic for a Bill to come into force as soon as it is passed. For example, if the Assembly passed a Bill requiring cyclists to wear helmets, bicycle shops, police officers, the cyclists themselves and the government department administering the law would have dozens of details to look after to comply with the new law. Bicycle shops would have to estimate how many helmets they would need to meet the new demand, decide which brands to stock and perhaps change their marketing strategy. Police officers would have to become familiar with the law and develop guidelines for enforcing it. Cyclists would need time just to get used to the idea as well as to research helmets and then buy the best one. And even before any of these things could happen, the government department in charge would have to draw up regulations such as penalties and helmet safety standards and then educate the public about the new law.

The Honourable Norman L. Kwong gives royal assent to Bills passed by the Assembly, 2009

Putting Your Tax Dollars to Work

In 1215 King John of England affixed the Great Seal upon the Magna Carta, protecting certain liberties and property rights from interference by the sovereign. As a result, the English Parliament was created as an attempt to control the monarch's use of public funds. Watching over government revenues from taxes, natural resources, federal transfers, fees, investments, et cetera, is still one of a modern Parliament's most important tasks. Alberta's Legislative Assembly keeps an eye on the government's spending plans through the budget process.

In 1733 Sir Robert Walpole, England's Prime Minister and Treasurer, was pictured in a political cartoon with a bagful of medicines and charms to help him plan government spending. The bag was called a "budget" after the Old French word for bag, *bouge*, and its diminutive form, *bougette*. From then on "budget" was used to refer to a government's revenue and expense plan for the year.

The government, guided by the Minister responsible for finance, determines its three-year fiscal plan and estimates the revenues and expenses for each ministry and for each entity within a ministry. The government also compiles spending estimates for each department on which the Legislative Assembly will vote. The government cannot levy taxes or spend them without the approval of the Members, elected by the people, who pay the taxes in the first place.

Determining the Budget

The government's budget covers a fiscal year, a 12-month accounting period from April 1 to March 31, but the budget process starts long before a fiscal year begins. Before drawing up a budget, the Minister responsible for finance must determine the economic outlook for the fiscal year. The Minister may meet with people from financial and business communities to assess energy pricing and other important financial matters. Knowing how much revenue to expect from major sources such as oil and gas helps the Minister to determine how much money will be available for government services, debt retirement and an "economic cushion."

Once Cabinet Ministers and the Treasury Board calculate and approve the entire budget, the Minister prepares a Budget Address, the government's fiscal plan, the government and ministry business plans and the estimates for each ministry.

The Minister usually delivers the address to the Assembly soon after the session opens. The Budget Address opens with the Finance Minister announcing, "I have received certain messages from His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor," and "The Lieutenant Governor transmits estimates of certain sums required for the service of the province... and recommends the same to the Assembly."

These announcements recall the earliest days of the English Parliament, when monarchs were the actual as well as ceremonial heads of government. Running

the kingdom was expensive. As a result, expenses often outpaced income coming into the Crown, and in order to make up the difference, the King began to tax the nobility. In 1215, when King John of England approved the Magna Carta, which included provisions to prevent monarchs from levying taxes "except by common counsel of our kingdom," it meant that the monarch now had to ask the advice of Parliament when considering raising taxes.

The more money monarchs needed, usually for war, the more people they had to get it from. Consequently, the Commons, local leaders of the shires and boroughs—the word comes from "communities" or "communes"—as well as the nobles were asked to attend Parliament and agree to collect taxes from the communities under their control and turn them over to the monarch. They, like the nobles, refused to hand over any money unless they had a say in how it would be spent. Thus, the House of Commons was born. The monarch would ask the House for a certain amount of money, and the House would debate the request and tell the monarch its decision.

Our Budget Address takes us back to those times. The Minister responsible for finance announces to the Assembly that the monarch, through the Lieutenant Governor, has sent a message asking for money to run the province for the year and would like the Assembly, on behalf of the citizens it represents, to approve the request. With the Premier and other Ministers the Minister responsible for finance shares in governing in the monarch's name and so transmits the message asking for money for the service of the province to the Assembly.

Debating the Budget

Just before delivering the Budget Address to the Assembly, the Minister responsible for finance moves a motion "that the Assembly approve in general the fiscal policies of the government." For the next few days Members of the Legislative Assembly discuss this motion in the budget debate, saying why the government's spending plans should be approved or rejected. By tradition the motion is never put to a vote. Its purpose is to provide a public setting for MLAs from both the governing party and the opposition to defend or criticize the government's overall financial policies.

Following the budget debate the Legislative Assembly must debate the department estimates in detail. The main estimates of departments stand referred to the legislative policy committees according to their respective mandates unless otherwise ordered. The legislative policy committees debate the main estimates for a specified number of hours for each department. Department budgets are based on the programs the departments offer to the public.

After the legislative policy committees consider the main estimates, the estimates are then referred to Committee of Supply, where they are voted upon. Supply refers to the money that the Assembly grants to the government to meet the

expenditures contained in the budget. The word comes from a time in medieval England when monarchs were not asking for money but for actual supplies, including armies, food, horses and so on, to fight their various wars.

In practice expenditures are always approved as long as the governing party holds a majority of seats in the Assembly because any difficult areas are resolved by cabinet in its earlier meetings. Committee study does, however, enable MLAs to publicize their views about the budget and to ask Ministers about their spending plans.

Once the Committee of Supply approves the estimates, the Minister responsible for finance introduces the *Appropriation Act*. This Bill, like all other Bills, must pass three readings plus study by the Committee of the Whole before it can become law (see Making Alberta's Laws). Once approved, it receives royal assent from the Lieutenant Governor. Each department may then spend your tax dollars.

Keeping Things Going between Budgets

In spite of the careful planning that goes into the annual budget, unexpected and urgent expenses often come up during the year. After expenditure review by the Treasury Board and cabinet the Minister responsible for finance may submit a request for supplementary estimates to the Legislative Assembly. Those requests have traditionally been considered and approved by the Committee of Supply. In addition, the Minister responsible for finance must table an updated fiscal plan showing how supplementary estimates can be accommodated in the revised fiscal plan while still observing legal requirements regarding debt repayment and achievement of a surplus.

Special warrants may also be used to approve additional government spending in an emergency or if the Legislative Assembly has been dissolved for an election and has not been reconvened. In such cases supplementary estimates that include special warrant spending are submitted to the Legislative Assembly for its approval when it reconvenes.

The Legislative Assembly Office

The origins of the Legislative Assembly Office (LAO) can be traced to 14th-century England, when Parliament elected the first Speaker and appointed the first Clerk. The ceremonial Speaker's procession, which opens every sitting of the Assembly, includes the Speaker, the Clerk and other key parliamentary staff in their traditional black robes.

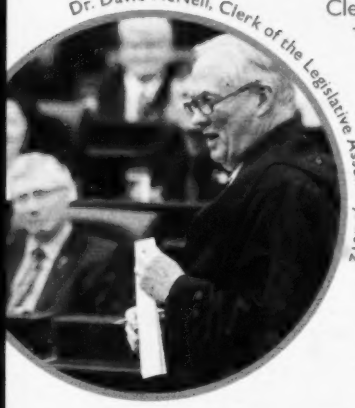
The Speaker is the head of the LAO and ranks in precedence directly after the Premier. Speakers are not members of cabinet, and the LAO is not a government department; however, because the Speaker has administrative authority over the office, it is sometimes called the Speaker's department. Its current title was made official when the *Legislative Assembly Act* was passed in 1983.

Within the traditions of parliamentary democracy as constitutionally established in Alberta, the role of the Legislative Assembly Office is to:

- Support the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly in carrying out the duties of office
- Support Members in carrying out their roles as elected representatives of the people of Alberta
- Record the proceedings and maintain and preserve the records of the Legislative Assembly
- Inform and educate the public on behalf of Members and the institution of Parliament
- Support the Assembly in protecting its institutions and privileges
- Support the exchange of information and ideas among Legislatures throughout the world
- Provide services to external clients as required

The Legislative Assembly Office is an essential part of the democratic process. It provides nonpartisan administrative and procedural services to MLAs of all political parties and ensures a smooth transition during provincial elections.

The Role of the Clerk



Dr. David McNeil, Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, 2012

The position of Clerk dates back to the 14th century, when a Clerk's most important skills were reading and writing. The Clerk read petitions, Bills and resolutions to the Assembly and kept its records.

In the Chamber the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly advises the Speaker on procedure and calls the daily order of business. Outside the Chamber the Clerk keeps House records, is responsible for producing Assembly documents and oversees the daily operations of the LAO. The Clerk's duties are similar to those of a Deputy Minister of a government department.

The Sergeant-at-Arms

Another legacy of early Parliament is the Sergeant-at-Arms. The Sergeant-at-Arms has custody of the Mace and, in the procession that begins each day's sitting, carries it to the Assembly table, where it remains throughout the sitting as a symbol of the Assembly's authority. An officer of the House, the Sergeant-at-Arms is also head of the Assembly's security service. In this capacity he is responsible for the safety and security of all persons within the Chamber, the galleries and precincts of the House. As well, he is principal security adviser to the Speaker, the Members and the LAO and provides guidance on security-related matters regarding constituency offices.

Parliamentary Counsel

Parliamentary Counsel are the legal and procedural advisers to the Speaker, the Assembly and officers of the Assembly. They sit at the table in the Assembly Chamber to advise the Speaker on Assembly procedure. Throughout the year they draft Private Members' Public Bills and provide nonpartisan legal and procedural advice to MLAs, committees and other branches of the LAO.

Operational Support

The Legislative Assembly Office also includes a number of branches which carry out the day-to-day work required to manage a large operation like the Legislative Assembly of Alberta. These branches provide services in the areas of financial management, information technology, human resources, security services, public information and programs for visitors.

When the Legislature is in session, LAO staff may change their schedules, duties and sometimes even office locations in order to provide services to the Assembly during day and evening sittings in the Chamber. LAO staff also assist MLAs in fulfilling their obligations to their constituents through their support of constituency office operations.

The Legislature Library

The Legislature Library was established in 1906 to serve as the parliamentary library for Members of the Legislative Assembly and provides nonpartisan, confidential information and reference services. The Library has an impressive collection of material to assist Members in their various roles as legislators, political debaters, public orators and constituency representatives. In addition to works on public policy, legislation and government documents, the Library collects local newspapers from around the province. The Library also undertakes the preservation of Alberta government and legislative documents in print and digital forms. Located behind the grand staircase in the Legislature Building, the Library is open to the public during business hours. The Library online catalogue can be accessed through the Legislative Assembly website at www.assembly.ab.ca.

The Legislature Library, 2013

It's All in *Hansard*

Hansard is the name given throughout the Commonwealth to the daily printed record of the proceedings of a Parliament. The name comes from the Hansard family, who published the United Kingdom's parliamentary debates from 1812 to 1888; however, making parliamentary speeches a matter of public record was William Cobbett's idea. Cobbett was a 19th-century reformer who published the first-ever record of debates in Britain in 1810. *Alberta Hansard* has been published since 1972.

Today we take it for granted that what Members say in the Assembly will be preserved in *Hansard*. But how do their spoken words become part of a printed record? Is the record verbatim; that is, does every word spoken in Alberta's Legislative Assembly find its way into *Hansard*? And how does the *Hansard* office produce a final, printed edition of *Hansard* in less than 24 hours?

The Rules *Hansard* Follows

Hansard operates under the authority of the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, and the editorial guidelines for *Hansard* editors are outlined in the Standing Orders, or rule book, of the Assembly. These guidelines say that revisions to the text must be limited to the correction of grammar, spelling and punctuation, that the correct parliamentary forms must be observed and that superfluous repetition and redundancies are minimized. They also say that the transcript shall remain an accurate and, as far as possible, an exact report of what was said.

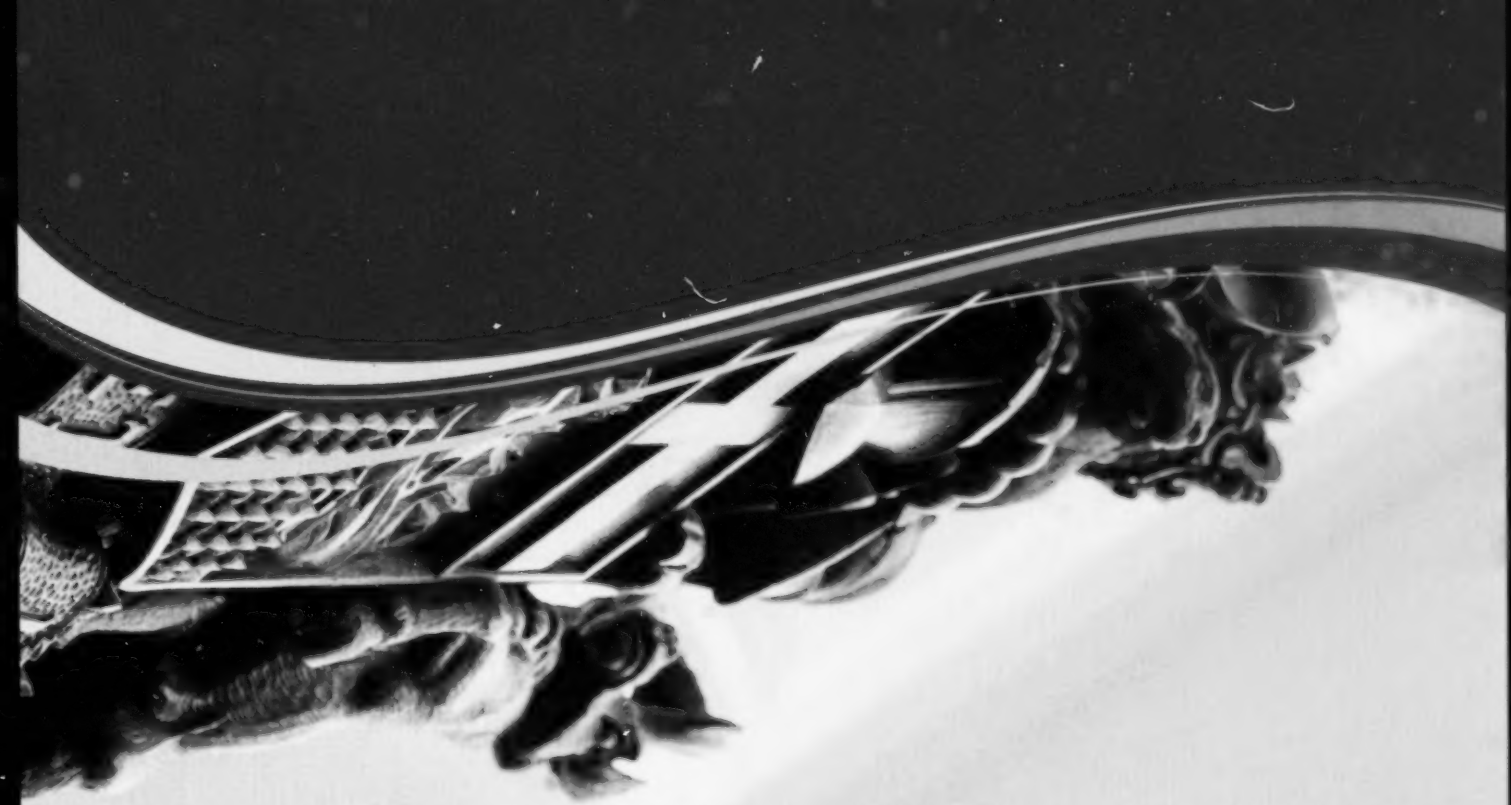
Every Word Is Recorded

Whenever an MLA speaks from his or her seat in the Chamber or in a legislative committee meeting outside the Chamber, the microphone installed on the desk picks up the words. The microphones are operated by a member of the *Hansard* staff, and the audio is stored on digital recording equipment.

How Is *Hansard* Produced?

The audio generated through the recording system is first transcribed by a team of input editors, who produce the unofficial draft transcripts, called the Blues. The Blues are produced in five-minute segments and are normally available within 45 minutes to an hour after the words are spoken. These Blues documents are then corrected and edited by copy editors before final proofreading and formatting of the entire issue, which is then electronically transmitted to a private-sector printing company. Each afternoon issue is printed overnight and is available to Members by 8 a.m. the following day. The electronic copy of *Alberta Hansard* also becomes part of the public record so that you and other members of the public may examine for

yourselves the performance of your elected representatives in the Assembly or in committee work. To make it easy to research the thousands of pages of *Hansard* text, the *Hansard* office produces an index. As well, *Hansard* for the Assembly and its committees can be searched on the Assembly website at www.assembly.ab.ca.



5. The Building and Its Symbols

The Legislature Building

On March 15, 1906, Alberta's first Legislature opened its First Session. There was no Legislature Building for Members to meet in, so the opening ceremonies were held at Edmonton's Thistle rink, just north of Jasper Avenue, after which the Assembly moved to the nearby McKay Avenue School.

Opening of the First Legislature, Thistle rink, 1906[1]

In these modest surroundings the Members dealt with one of the first items of business for the new province, deciding on a capital. Edmonton had been named the temporary capital by the Dominion government in 1905. Motions to move the capital to Banff, Red Deer and Calgary were not seconded or were defeated in the Assembly, therefore affirming Edmonton as the permanent capital.

Choosing a site for the building was easy. The high-cliffed bank of the North Saskatchewan River was both physically commanding and historically significant. Here was the site of the fifth and last Fort Edmonton, a major fur-trading post of the Hudson's Bay Company, around which the settlement of Edmonton had developed.

Beaux Arts Style

Alberta's Legislature Building was designed by provincial architect Allan Merrick Jeffers, a graduate of the Rhode Island School of Design in the United States. Richard P. Blakey, Jeffers' successor, also contributed to the design of the rotunda and the main staircase leading up to the Chamber.

Jeffers was probably influenced in his design by the state capitol building in Rhode Island, which was in the popular beaux arts style. This style is evident in the main entrance, or portico, of Alberta's Legislature Building, which is characterized by Corinthian columns and a dome rising above a spacious rotunda. The symmetric design and layout are also elements of this style.

Materials suitable for the building's lofty exterior include grey granodiorite, commonly known as granite, quarried on islands in the mouth of Jervis Inlet, British Columbia, for the exterior walls of the basement and the first storey. The other four storeys were made from a combination of granite from Kelly and Murray of Vancouver, British Columbia, Glenbow sandstone from the Glenbow quarry, near Cochrane, Alberta, yellow Paskapoo sandstone from other quarries and a little Ohio sandstone and Indiana limestone. The building's interior primarily features marble from Quebec and Pennsylvania.

[1] Photo: Courtesy of Provincial Archives of Alberta

The foundation for the Legislature Building was laid in 1907, and on September 3, 1912, His Royal Highness the Duke of Connaught, Canada's Governor General, declared the Legislature Building officially open. The interior's grandeur was obvious from the moment the front doors first opened. The main entrance leads directly into the rotunda, which is encircled by marble columns. Its walls rise from the main rotunda to the vaulted dome, a distance of approximately 33.5 metres or 110 feet. The rotunda connects the east and west wings of the main floor to the great marble staircase that leads to the Assembly Chamber, the domed ceiling of which features stained glass skylights and about 500 light bulbs.

The Legislature Building has undergone many changes since its 1912 opening. Richard P. Blakey, provincial architect until 1924, added the inner dome seen when one looks up from the rotunda. In 1932 palm seeds were planted in pots in the gallery ringing the interior dome; these are now five large trees peering down at the rotunda's fountain. Although it has never been confirmed, it is believed that the original seeds may have been a gift from the state of California.

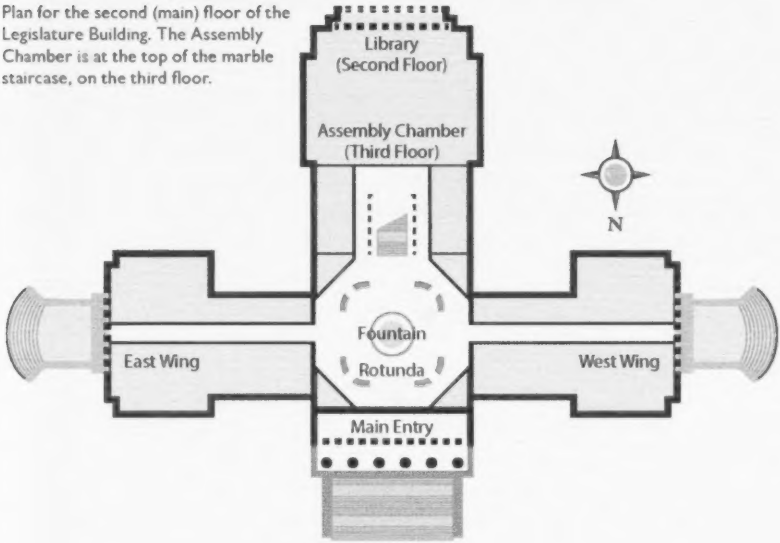
The Legislature Building

The mahogany panels that grace the walls of the Chamber were added in 1987, as were an elegant pale green carpet and additional gallery seating.

In commemoration of Alberta's centennial in 2005 stained glass windows featuring the royal cypher and Alberta's emblems were installed above the main entrance to the Legislature Building. The six stained glass windows were unveiled by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II during her visit to the Legislature on May 24, 2005. Also added in 2005 to commemorate the province's centennial was a watercolour painting entitled *Fortis et Liber*, named for Alberta's motto, which is Latin for "strong and free." This colourful work of art is displayed in the Legislature rotunda.

In 2006, to commemorate 100 years of democracy in Alberta, a series of historical plaques documenting Alberta's heritage from presettlement through to the present day were installed along the south Legislature pedway, aptly renamed Members' Way in honour of the countless Members who have travelled that path throughout their careers. This collection will continue to grow as each new Legislature is marked. Also added in 2006 was the stained glass window in the Legislature Library. In addition to commemorating 100 years of democracy, the window marks the 100th anniversary of the Legislature Library.

Plan for the second (main) floor of the Legislature Building. The Assembly Chamber is at the top of the marble staircase, on the third floor.



In 2009 a stained glass window was added to the east side of the Legislature Chamber, a gift from the city of Edmonton. The artists, Barbara and Pawel Jozefowicz, designed and titled their piece around the theme of Alberta, the Land of Opportunities.

The building also houses images of our history and political traditions. Inside the rotunda are two bronze statues, one of Princess Louise Caroline Alberta, the fourth daughter of Queen Victoria after whom the province is named, and one of Chief Crowfoot, a Blackfoot leader whose policy of co-operation led to the peaceful settlement of Alberta. Portraits of Premiers and Lieutenant Governors adorn the walls of the third floor, and portraits of Alberta's Speakers hang one floor above. Decorative hardwood carvings include coats of arms above the main entrance to the Chamber, above the Speaker's chair in the Chamber and in the Carillon Room on the fifth floor. The building also contains the offices of the Premier, the cabinet and other government Members, the Speaker and the Lieutenant Governor.

The Legislature Building has changed over the years. Originally there was a circular well in the rotunda, where the fountain now sits, enabling people to see down into the first floor below. In 1959, when Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II came to Alberta on her first official visit as Queen of Canada, the central fountain was installed to mark the occasion. This was the second fountain to be built in this spot, the first being a temporary one constructed in 1939 to commemorate the visit of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth.

In 1967, to commemorate Canada's centennial, a carillon was installed on the fifth floor. The carillon originally had 305 bells, but by 1996 it had 391 bells, which were

played from a standard organ console. In February 2011 a new digital carillon was installed in honour of the upcoming centennial of the Legislature Building.

In 2012 the Legislature Building celebrated the centennial of its official opening. Several parts of the building were restored, including the exterior of the dome, the cork floor in the Library, and the marble in the rotunda. In addition, among the many celebrations and events, a time capsule which had been placed in the cornerstone during construction was opened. Artifacts in the capsule from 1909 included newspapers, coins, lists of Members and dignitaries of the day and a photograph of the trowel used to cement the cornerstone. A new time capsule placed in the same spot as the original time capsule will be opened in 2112.

Place for People

The Legislature Building belongs to all Albertans. It is here that the Members we elect carry out our business. Within the Chamber they decide how our tax dollars will be spent and debate and enact the laws we live by. Decisions important to all of us are made within its walls.

Over the years the Legislature Building has become ever-more accessible due to technological advancements. Significant innovations include a virtual visit, which allows people from all over the world to walk the halls of the building and uses social media channels to connect Albertans. These digital interactions enable all Albertans to experience, learn and participate in the democratic process.

During the 1970s the surrounding grounds were transformed from a snarl of old buildings and traffic to a park that would make the Legislature a more welcoming place for Albertans and tourists alike. The old houses were bulldozed and the traffic and parking moved underground; in their place is now a vast green landscape with fountains, walkways and a reflecting pool.

The grounds, which were completed in 1983, have become not only a favourite summer park but also the site of many historic occasions. Members of the Royal Family have been received here, and in 1988 and 2010 the Olympic torch relay paused on the building's front steps. Every year thousands of citizens gather to celebrate events such as Family Day, Canada Day and Celebrate the Season at the Legislature.

Improvements to the Legislature Grounds include a pedway system linking the Legislature, the Annex, several government buildings and the city LRT system. The pedway currently houses the Visitor Services office, the Legislative Assembly Gift Shop and Interpretive Centre and classrooms for student programming. Work is underway to renovate the former Federal Public Building nearby and create an adjacent plaza to make room for the growth of legislative services and visitor programming.

The Emblems of Alberta

What does the wild rose have in common with the lodgepole pine? How are they both related to great horned owls and petrified wood?

All are emblems of Alberta. They symbolize the history, people, places, natural features and even values that together make Alberta what it is. From the coat of arms to the Alberta tartan each emblem signifies an important aspect of Alberta's identity.

Our Coat of Arms

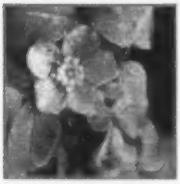
On May 30, 1907, King Edward VII gave Alberta its first coat of arms, in the shape of a shield. At the top of the shield is a red St. George's cross, a component of the English flag. The mountains, foothills, prairies and wheat fields unfold beneath it, symbolizing the province's variety of landscapes.

In 1980, on Alberta's 75th anniversary, a crest and supporters were added to the shield to form our present coat of arms. The crest consists of a beaver, a symbol of the fur trade that led to the exploration and settlement of Canada, with the royal crown on its back. The supporters, a lion (or golden lion) on the left and a pronghorn antelope on the right, stand for Britain and Alberta respectively. Below them is a grassy mount dotted with wild roses. The motto at the base reads *Fortis et Liber*, Latin for "strong and free."

At the invitation of the Chief Herald of Canada the Office of the Lieutenant Governor worked with the Canadian Heraldic Authority to have the coat of arms of the province of Alberta registered in the national armorial. The Chief Herald's office recommended the use of the royal helmet as opposed to the gentleman's helmet. The reasons were threefold: the royal helmet provides a stronger link with Alberta's history and traditions, it enhances the overall symbolism of the arms and all other provinces that include a helmet in the provincial arms use a royal helmet. The new Alberta coat of arms was registered officially on January 15, 2008.

Alberta's Flag

Part of the same coat of arms adopted in 1907 is on Alberta's flag, which was adopted in 1968. The flag consists of the shield from the coat of arms centred against a blue background.

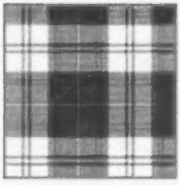


The Floral Emblem

The wild rose, or prickly rose (Rosa acicularis), was designated the floral emblem of Alberta in 1930. Its bright pink blossoms enhance the countryside in all parts of the province. The wild rose is also useful: its colourful red berries (or hips) feed many species of birds and add a unique flavour to teas and jellies.

Alberta Tartan

Alberta's tartan pays tribute to the Scottish component of our heritage. The colours represent our abundant natural resources: green for forests, gold for wheat fields, blue for clear skies and lakes, pink for wild roses and black for coal and petroleum. The tartan was designed by the Edmonton Rehabilitation Society for the Handicapped (now Goodwill Industries) and was officially recognized in 1961.



Alberta Dress Tartan

The Alberta dress tartan complements the Alberta tartan and can be worn for dancing, ceremonial occasions and formal attire. It was adopted by Alberta in 2000 and includes the same colours as the Alberta tartan with large sections of white, a symbol of Alberta's clean, bright, snowy days.

The Official Bird

A King assigned Alberta its first coat of arms, but it was the province's citizens (primarily schoolchildren) who chose the official bird. They voted in 1974 for the great horned owl (Bubo virginianus), a year-round resident of the province. The Legislature approved their choice in 1977. A resourceful and resilient bird, the great horned owl exemplifies the best traits of Alberta's people both past and present.

Official Stone

In 1977 the Legislative Assembly adopted petrified wood as the official stone of Alberta. The petrification of wood involves the replacement of original wood tissue from trees of the Cretaceous and Paleocene periods (over 60 million years ago) with microcrystalline quartz deposits. Petrified wood is commonly found in gravel pits throughout Alberta.

Official Tree

The lodgepole pine (Pinus contorta var. latifolia), a western tree prevalent in the Rocky Mountains, became Alberta's official tree in 1984, a culmination of four years' effort by the Junior Forest Wardens of Alberta. Lodgepole pine was an important source of railroad ties during Alberta's settlement and since has played an important role in Alberta's economic development. It has even been suggested that the lodgepole pine may have been used by certain First Nations to make teepee poles (hence its name). Even today the long, straight lodgepole pine is in great demand in the lumber industry.

Official Mammal

In 1989 the Assembly designated the Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep (Ovis canadensis) Alberta's official mammal after contacting Alberta schools to gauge their support of this choice. The bighorn sheep is commonly seen in the Rocky Mountains and was given its scientific name in 1804 by botanist George Shaw as based on his observations near Exshaw. With its proud carriage, crowned by magnificent horns, the bighorn sheep is a majestic inhabitant of our province.

Official Fish

In 1995 the bull trout (Salvelinus confluentus) became the provincial fish of Alberta. The bull trout is actually a char and closely related to other members of the char family such as the lake and brook trout. The bull trout generally has light-coloured spots on its body and does not have any dark spots or markings on its dorsal fins. Depending on its environment and food supply, it can weigh up to 20 pounds (approximately 8 kilograms) or more and can live up to 20 years.

Official Grass

Rough fescue (Festuca scabrella) is a perennial bunchgrass with stiff, narrow leaves that are rough to the touch. Alberta has the largest area of rough fescue grassland in the world and is the only place in North America where all three types—plains, foothills and northern fescue—occur. Fescue grasslands provide vital food for wildlife and livestock year-round. On May 7, 2003, rough fescue was adopted due to the efforts of the Prairie Conservation Forum.

The Legislative Assembly Brand

The cattle industry and ranching have always been mainstays of Alberta's economy. Likewise, cowboys and rodeos are a key part of our western heritage. So it should come as no surprise that in 1998, in honour of the Year of the Cowboy, the Legislative Assembly of Alberta introduced its registered brand. A brand is a permanent mark applied to livestock for identification purposes. The Legislative Assembly isn't in the business of raising livestock, but the Half Diamond AB, commonly referred to as Rafter AB, is a tribute to the contribution of the ranching industry to Alberta's culture and economy. The brand is made up of the letters AB shielded by a half diamond or rafter. The rafter represents the roof of the Legislature Chamber, and the AB is the abbreviation for Alberta. As a working brand it can be applied only to the right shoulder of horses and cattle.

The brand was certified on October 30, 1998, by the Honourable Ed Stelmach, who later became Alberta's 13th Premier but at the time was serving as Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. The Honourable Ken Kowalski, Speaker of Alberta's Legislative Assembly at the time, presented the official brand to the Legislative Assembly on December 2, 1998. Alberta's Legislative Assembly was the first in Canada to have an official brand, and while you won't come across many cows or horses bearing the insignia, a variety of items featuring the brand are for sale in the Legislative Assembly Gift Shop.

Glossary

Glossary

Amendment: An alteration proposed for or made to a motion or Bill.

Appropriation: A sum of money allocated by the Legislature for a specific purpose outlined in the government's spending estimates.

Bicameral: A two-House system of government. Canada's Parliament is bicameral, meaning it has a House of Commons and a Senate.

Bill: A proposed law. To become law, a Bill must pass three readings and committee study and be given royal assent. A Bill may propose an entirely new law or change an existing one.

Black Rod: A ceremonial baton the Sergeant-at-Arms carries only when escorting the Sovereign, a Governor General and, more routinely, the Lieutenant Governor into the Chamber for the throne speech or royal assent.

Breach of privilege: See parliamentary privilege.

Budget: The government's estimated revenue and expenses for a fiscal year. Alberta's fiscal year is from April 1 to March 31.

Budget Address: The speech made in the House by the Minister responsible for finance, introducing the government's fiscal plans for the coming year.

Budget debate: A debate on a motion approving the government's budgetary policy. The motion is moved by the Minister of Finance following the presentation of the Budget Address.

Bylaw: A law made by a municipal government.

Cabinet (Executive Council): The heads of government ministries. The Premier is the head of the cabinet and chooses Cabinet Ministers from among elected Members of his or her party.

Cabinet Minister: A Member of the cabinet; the head of a government ministry. The Premier chooses Cabinet Ministers, and the Lieutenant Governor swears them in.

Caucus: All of the elected Members from one party; a private meeting of this group.

Chamber: The room where the Legislative Assembly holds its sittings.

Civil servants: People who work for government ministries.

Clerk of the Legislative Assembly: The permanent chief procedural and administrative adviser to the Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly and secretary of the Alberta branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. This position has administrative responsibility in the Legislative Assembly Office equivalent to that of a deputy minister of a government department.

Committee: A body of Members selected to consider such matters as the Assembly may refer to it or empower it to examine, including Bills.

Committee of Supply: A committee of all Members of the Legislative Assembly that meets to vote on the government's budget estimates.

Committee of the Whole: A committee of all Members of the Legislative Assembly that meets to discuss Bills in detail.

Constituency: A voting district. In Alberta there are 87 constituencies; each elects one Member of the Legislative Assembly.

Constitution: The supreme law of a country. The Canadian Constitution is made up of the *British North America Act, 1867* (now called the *Constitution Act, 1867*) and its amendments; all the Acts and orders which gave Canada new territories and created its provinces; the *Constitution Act, 1982*; and unwritten customs called conventions.

Constitutional monarchy: A system of government in which the supreme law is the nation's Constitution but the formal head of state is a monarch, represented in Canada by the Governor General and in Alberta by the Lieutenant Governor.

Daily Routine: The initial part of the Assembly's proceedings that includes Oral Question Period.

Department: A Cabinet Minister's primary delivery entity for which most spending must be voted by the Legislative Assembly.

Deputy Chair: A Member chosen to serve as a replacement for the Chair of Committees during the latter's absence, including taking on the role of Acting Speaker when required.

Dissolution: The means by which a Legislature comes to an end before an election. The Lieutenant Governor dissolves the Legislature on the Premier's request.

Estimates: Proposed expenses for each government department.

Executive Council: The Members of cabinet, headed by the Premier, who are almost always chosen from among Members of the Assembly, normally the party holding the majority of the seats in the Assembly.

Federation: A system of government with two levels that share responsibilities. The national level of government looks after national concerns (currency, defence, monetary policy and so on) while the provincial or state level looks after regional concerns (health, education and so on). Examples of federations include Canada, Australia and the United States.

Filibuster: Prolonged debate by a minority to delay or prevent a government motion or a government Bill from passing, the hope being that the majority will either grant concessions or withdraw the Bill or motion. The government can end the filibuster by moving time allocation, a motion for the purpose of allotting a specified number of hours for consideration and disposal of proceedings.

Government: In the parliamentary sense the cabinet (Executive Council), headed by the Premier. To remain in office, the government must have the support of a majority of Members in the Assembly.

***Hansard*:** The official record of the debates in the House and its committees, named for Thomas Curson Hansard, who started printing the British parliamentary debates in 1809.

Head of government: Chief officer of the executive branch of government, presiding over a cabinet. In the case of a provincial Legislature the head of government is the Premier.

Head of state: Chief public representative of a nation with duties granted by a Constitution. As Canada is a constitutional monarchy, the head of state is Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, Queen of Canada, represented in Alberta by the Lieutenant Governor. The role of the head of state in Canada includes ceremonial, social and constitutional duties.

Hoist amendment: An amendment at second or third reading of a Bill that, if passed, results in the Bill not proceeding any further.

House: The Legislative Assembly and the Chamber in which it meets.

Impartial: Not favouring one side or the other.

Introduction of Bills (first reading): The order of business when a Member introduces a Bill. A Bill is not debatable at this stage.

***Journals* of the Assembly:** The official record of the proceedings of the House, prepared under the authority of the Clerk. The *Journals* are compiled by the Bills and Journals Clerk.

Leader of the Official Opposition: The leader of the political party holding the second-largest number of seats in the Assembly.

Legislative Assembly: A law-making body of elected representatives; sometimes called the House.

Legislative Assembly Office (LAO): The independent, nonpartisan office responsible for providing services to all MLAs, including record keeping, research, accounting, administration, electronic data processing and public outreach support. The Legislative Assembly Office is headed by the Speaker.

Legislative Policy Committee: A standing committees which is set up to examine particular issues.

Legislature: A law-making body consisting, in Canadian provinces, of the Lieutenant Governor (constitutional head of state and monarch's representative) and the Legislative Assembly (the elected representatives). Each election results in a new Legislature.

Lieutenant Governor: The provincial representative of the monarch and the largely ceremonial head of state. On the advice of the Prime Minister the Governor General appoints the Lieutenant Governor to a five-year term; the federal government pays the salary.

Mace: The ceremonial staff that symbolizes the authority of the Legislature to make laws on behalf of the people. The Assembly cannot meet unless it is present. The Mace rests on the table in the Chamber.

Majority government: A government formed by the party or the coalition of parties holding the majority of seats in the Assembly.

Ministry: A Cabinet Minister's complete area of responsibility (or portfolio) as defined by legislation. Each ministry consists of a department and, in many cases, several regulated funds and agencies. The Legislative Assembly does not vote on spending by regulated funds and agencies.

Minority government: A government formed by a party which does not hold a majority of the seats in the House, possibly in a coalition with one or more other parties.

MLA: Member of the Legislative Assembly; a person elected to the Legislative Assembly to represent one of Alberta's electoral districts. Newfoundland's Members are MHAs (Members of the House of Assembly), while Ontario's are Members of Provincial Parliament (MPPs) and Quebec's are MNAs (Members of the National Assembly).

Motion: A proposal made to the Assembly by a Member that the House do something, order something to be done or express an opinion with regard to some matter.

Official Opposition: The party having the second-largest number of seats in the Assembly, known officially as Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition.

Opposition: MLAs belonging to parties other than the governing party. In the Chamber opposition MLAs sit across from the cabinet. The role of the opposition is to criticize government policies, suggest alternatives and make sure the public is aware of what the government is doing or plans to do.

Order Paper: A document published daily during sittings of the House which contains all business which has had proper notice and which has not previously been disposed of by the Assembly.

Page: Alberta high school and first-year university students hired to help Members during sittings of the Assembly. They deliver messages and materials to MLAs in the Chamber and to offices in the Legislature Building and the Legislature Annex.

Parliament: A Legislature. Under our Constitution Canada's Parliament consists of the Governor General (the monarch's representative at the federal level) and two Houses: an appointed upper House, called the Senate, and an elected lower House, called the House of Commons.

Parliamentary privilege: Those rights and immunities enjoyed by the House as a collectivity and by each Member individually without which Members could not carry out their duties and the House could not fulfill its functions.

Parliamentary procedure: The rules by which the House conducts its business, based on statutes, the standing orders, authoritative procedural works, precedents and tradition.

Parliamentary system of government: A system of government in which the cabinet is appointed from among elected Members of an Assembly. The cabinet holds power, but in order for it to remain in power, its major decisions must be supported by a majority in the Assembly.

Partisan: A person who supports a political party or cause over other parties or causes.

Petition: A means for a group of people to appeal to the Legislative Assembly for some kind of action.

Political party: A group of people who hold similar political aims and opinions who have organized, usually to contest elections so that they might form a government. There are currently four political parties represented in Alberta's Legislature: Progressive Conservatives, Wildrose Alliance, Alberta Liberals and New Democrats.

Precedent: A Speaker's ruling or a practice of the House taken as a rule for subsequent cases of a similar nature. Not all decisions and practices constitute precedents.

Premier: The leader of the political party electing the most Members of the Legislative Assembly (in the case of a majority government) or having the support of a majority in the Assembly.

Private Member: Any MLA who is not a Cabinet Minister.

Prorogue: The act by which a session of the Legislature is brought to an end. Prorogation normally occurs immediately before a new session of the Legislature begins.

Question of privilege: See parliamentary privilege.

Readings: Stages through which a Bill must pass in its progress in the House. A Bill must go through three readings.

Reasoned amendment: A type of amendment that, if passed, results in a Bill not proceeding any further.

Regulations: The administrative details of an Act. They are not included in the Act itself. Members of the Legislative Assembly must approve an Act before it can become law while regulations are approved by the Minister and/or the department responsible for enforcing the Act.

Responsible government: The principle that Ministers are collectively responsible to the Assembly for actions of the government.

Royal Assent: A ceremony in which the monarch's representative at the provincial level, the Lieutenant Governor, gives final approval to a Bill.

Sergeant-at-Arms: Legislative Assembly officer in charge of security for the Assembly, MLAs and visitors to the Chamber. The Sergeant-at-Arms also has custody of the Mace and the Black Rod.

Session: A series of meetings of the Legislative Assembly opened by royal proclamation and closed by a cabinet order. When the session is divided into spring and fall periods, these periods are called sittings, as are the daily meetings of the Assembly. Under the Constitution the Legislature must hold at least one session each year, and the interval between the last sitting day of one session and the first sitting day of the next can be no longer than 12 months.

Speaker: The impartial presiding officer of the Assembly who maintains order and rules on procedural issues. The Speaker is a Member of the Legislative Assembly who has been elected to the position by all MLAs by secret ballot. The Speaker has administrative responsibility in the Legislative Assembly Office equivalent to that of a Minister of a government department but is not a member of cabinet.

Standing committees of the Assembly: Committees established in the standing orders of the Assembly for the life of a Legislature.

Standing Orders: Rules of procedure established by the Assembly.

Statute: A law. A Bill is called a statute once it receives royal assent.

Strangers: All persons who are neither Members nor officers of the Assembly. Strangers may observe the proceedings of the House from the public gallery.

Supplementary estimates: An expenditure proposal introduced to provide funds to the government to meet new or increased costs.

Supply: The provision of money to the Crown for public services.

Table officers: Employees of the Legislative Assembly Office who provide procedural advice during sittings of the House, keep the minutes of the proceedings and record the votes.

Throne speech: The speech delivered by the Lieutenant Governor which opens each new session and outlines the government's plans for the session.

Time allocation (formerly closure): A measure used by the government to limit time for debate on a Bill.

Unicameral: Having only one legislative Chamber. Each of Canada's provincial Legislatures is unicameral.

Votes and Proceedings: The title of the daily record or minutes of the House. The Votes and Proceedings are a record of the House's proceedings and, when combined, constitute the *Journals*, which are the formal and permanent record of the proceedings of the Assembly.

Whip: A Member charged with keeping the other Members of the same party informed concerning House business and ensuring their attendance in the Assembly or in committee, especially when a vote is anticipated.

Index

Index

A

Aberhart, William ... 7
Aboriginal Canadians' right to vote
  See First Nations' right to vote
Alberta ... 2
Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund Committee
  See Heritage Savings Trust Fund Committee
Alberta, Princess Louise Caroline
  See Louise Caroline Alberta, Princess (statute)
Aldermen (municipal government) ... 13
Amendments to Bills ... 51
Appropriation Bills ... 44, 56
Areas of responsibility
  See Powers, Division of (federal system)
Auditor General ... 26

B

Backbenchers
  See Private Members
Beauchesne's ... 40
Bicameral system ... 2, 11, 14, 16
Bighorn sheep (emblem) ... 70
Bills
  See Laws
Bird, Provincial ... 69
Black Rod ... 34
  diagram ... 35
  photo ... 34
Blakey, Richard P. (architect) ... 64, 65
Bowen, Hon. John C. ... 7
Brand of the Legislative Assembly ... 71
British North America Act ... 7, 12
Budget ... 54
Budget Address ... 42, 54, 55
Budget debate ... 55
Bull trout (emblem) ... 70
Bylaws (municipal government) ... 13

C

Cabinet ... 13
  Canada/U.S. comparison ... 14–16
  role in estimates determination ... 54
  role in law-making ... 30, 50

Cabinet (federal) 11
Cabinet Ministers
budget-making role 54
law-making role 30, 50
Oral Question Period participation 43, 48
role of 13
Cabinet Ministers' statements
See Ministerial Statements
Cabinet orders 7
Cabinet (provincial) 12
Cabinet, Shadow
See Shadow cabinet
Candidates for election 12, 15, 19, 20
Carillon 66–67
Caucus 23, 29–30, 50
Centennial of Alberta
commoration of 65
Chair of Committees 44, 51
Chamber
photo 42
Charter of Rights and Freedoms 8
Château Clique 4
Chief Electoral Officer 18, 26
Chief Herald 35
Child and Youth Advocate 26
Clerk 43, 50, 57
photo 58
role of 58
Coat of arms 32, 33, 68, 69
Commissioner (territorial government) 12
Committee of Supply 55, 56
chair presides over 44
Committee of the Whole 16, 32, 42, 44, 51, 52, 56
chair presides over 44, 51
Committees 25, 26–27, 29, 42, 44, 55, 61
Committees, Chair of
See Chair of Committees
Committees, Legislative policy
See Legislative policy committees
Commonwealth Parliamentary Association 38
Confederation 4, 7–8
Conflicts of Interest Act 27
Connaught, HRH Duke of 65
Constituencies 5, 15, 18–19, 20, 21, 22
Constituency offices 22, 28, 58
Constituent participation 23

Constitution 6–8, 39
division of powers under 10–12
patriation of 8
Constitutional monarchy 6–8
Councils (municipal government) 13
Critics, Opposition 24, 25, 28
Crowfoot, Blackfoot Chief (statute) 66

D

Debate
daily sequence of 42–45
rules of debate 40
Defeat of government
See Government, Resignation of
Democracy 2, 5, 52, 57, 65
Departments of government 29, 30, 42, 50, 53, 54, 55, 57, 58
Dissolution of the Legislature 7, 18, 24, 56
Dominion Lands Act 5
Durham, Lord 4

E

Edmonton named capital of Alberta 5, 64
Elections 3, 8, 12, 15, 18–21, 26
Canada/U.S. comparison 15
Elections Alberta 18, 21, 28
Electoral Boundaries Commission 18
Electoral districts
See Constituencies
Electoral Officer, Chief
See Chief Electoral Officer
Elizabeth II, Queen 6, 14, 66
photo 14, 34
Emblems of Alberta 33, 65, 68–70
Erskine May 40
Estimates of government expenditures 29, 42, 44, 54–56
Ethell, Hon. Donald S. (photo) 9
Ethics Commissioner 26
Executive Branch 3, 15, 29
Canada/U.S. comparison 15–16
Executive Council 29
Executive Council (territorial government) 12–13

F

Family Compact 4
Federal system of government 4, 14–15

Fescue grass
See Rough fescue grass (emblem)
Filibuster 39, 51–52
Financial management services 58
First Nations' right to vote 3, 19
First past the post
See Plurality system
Fish, Provincial 70
Flag, Provincial 68
Flower, Provincial 69
Fort Edmonton 64
Fortis et Liber
See Motto of Alberta
Fountain in rotunda 65, 66
Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act 26
Free votes by Members 23

G

Galleries in the Assembly Chamber 42, 43, 44, 46, 58, 80
Gift Shop
See Interpretive Centre and Gift Shop
Government 3, 10–16, 29, 39, 42
definition 10
Government business 44
Government departments
See Departments of government
Government motions 44
Government programs 10, 24, 29, 30, 43, 55
Government, Resignation of 14
Governor General (Canada) 6, 7, 11, 14, 34
Governor General in Council 6
Governor (U.S.) 14, 15, 16
Grass, Provincial 70
Great horned owl (emblem) 69
Grounds of the Legislature 67
Guests
See Visitors/Guests, Introduction of

H

Hansard 20, 47, 60–61
Head of state 2, 6, 14
Canada/U.S. comparison 14
Heritage Savings Trust Fund Committee 26
photo 28
Historical plaques 65

Hoist amendment
See Six months' hoist amendment
Hole, Hon. Dr. Lois E. (photo) 16
House of Commons (Canada) 7, 11
House of Commons Procedure and Practice 40
House of Commons (U.K.) 2, 3, 32, 34, 37, 39, 55
House of Lords 2, 34, 48
House of Representatives (U.S.) 14, 16
Human resource services 58

I

Independent candidates for election 12, 19
Information and Privacy Commissioner 26
Information technology services 58
Interpretive Centre and Gift Shop 67, 71
Introduction of Visitors/Guests
See Visitors/Guests, Introduction of

J

Jeffers, Allan Merrick (architect) 64
Judicial branch of government 15, 29

K

Kings
See Monarchs
Kwong, Hon. Norman L. (photo) 53

L

Laurier, Sir Wilfrid 5
Laws 16
debating and passing of 50–53
Introduction of (Bills) 43
proposing of 3, 23, 43
Canada/U.S. comparison 16
Legislation
See Laws
Legislative Assembly of Alberta 12, 14, 20, 42–59
diagram 12
Legislative Assembly Office 37, 57–59
Legislative Assembly website 20, 21, 25, 47, 49, 59, 61
Legislative branch of government 3, 29, 38
Canada/U.S. comparison 15–16
Legislative Offices Committee 26
Legislative policy committees 27
Legislature Building 59, 64–67
photo 65

Legislature Library 59, 65
photo 59
Legislature public information line 21, 28, 47
Legislatures, Canada/U.S. comparison 14–16
Legislatures, Provincial 2, 4, 7, 10, 12
Lieutenant Governors
historical origin of 4
in a parliamentary system 2
powers of 6
role of 6–7, 12, 18, 42, 52–53
role of, Canada/U.S. comparison 14–16
Lieutenant Governors in Alberta
general 34, 68
historical list of 9
photos 9, 16, 53
portraits 66
use of power by 7
Lobbyists Act 27
Local government
See Municipal government
Lodgepole pine (emblem) 70
Louise Caroline Alberta, Princess (statute) 66

M

Mace 32–33, 34, 38, 44, 58
diagram 33
Magna Carta 54, 55
Majority government 3, 30
Mammal, Provincial 70
Mayors (municipal government) 13
Members of the Legislative Assembly
administrative support for 57, 58
budget-making function 30, 54–56
law-making function 30, 50–52
law-making function, Canada/U.S. comparison 15
number of 20
photo 22
role of 5, 15, 22–28, 50
written record of remarks by *Hansard* 60
Members' Services Committee 26
Members' Statements 43
Members' Way 65
Ministerial Statements 43
Ministers
See Cabinet Ministers

Ministries of government
See Departments of government
Minority government 3
Monarchs
as head of state 2, 6, 54–56
as head of state, Canada/U.S. comparison 14
Mace as a symbol of 32
powers of 6–7
relation to parliaments/Legislatures 6, 11, 36–37
Monarchy, Constitutional
See Constitutional monarchy
Money Bills 25
Motions
See Government motions or Private Members, Business of
Motions for Returns 45
Motto of Alberta 65, 68
Municipal government 10, 12, 13

N

Nonconfidence in government, vote of 15
North West Mounted Police 5
North-West Territories Act 5
North-West Territories Legislative Assembly (1888) 5
Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly (current) 12
Notices of Motions 43
Nunavut Legislative Assembly 13

O

Ombudsman 26
Opposition parties
budget-making function 55
law-making function 52
photo 44
role of 4, 25, 39, 43, 44–45, 52, 55
written record of remarks by *Hansard* 60
Oral Question Period 25, 37, 40, 42, 43, 47–48
Order Paper 42, 48, 52
Orders in council
See Cabinet orders
Owl
See Great horned owl (emblem)

P

Palm trees in dome gallery 65
Parliamentary Counsel 45, 47, 58
Parliamentary language 40

Parliamentary principles 39–40
Parliamentary privilege
See Privilege, Parliamentary
Parliamentary procedure 39–61
Parliamentary system 2–5, 14, 29, 36, 37
Party discipline 3, 15, 39
Patriation of the Constitution
See Constitution
Petitions 43, 47–48, 49
Petrified wood (emblem) 69
Plurality system 19
Political parties 3–4, 6, 11, 12–13, 19–20, 23, 28, 44, 47
Canada/U.S. comparison 15
Popular vote 19
Powers, Division of (federal system) 10, 11
Canada/U.S. comparison 14–16
Precedents (Speakers' rulings) 40
Premier
budget-making function 55
photo 30
portraits 66
role of 2, 3, 18, 36, 48
role of, Canada/U.S. comparison 14–15
President (U.S.) 6, 14
Press gallery 46, 47
Prime Minister 2, 3, 5, 6, 11, 14, 54
Privacy Commissioner
See Information and Privacy Commissioner
Private Bills 43, 45, 50
committee 26
Private Members 24, 25, 43, 48, 50, 51
business of 45
Privilege, Parliamentary 26, 37, 39, 40, 46
Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing Committee 26
Procedures
See Parliamentary procedure
Proclamation of laws 53
Proportional representation 19
Prorogation 7, 42
Provincial governments
See Legislatures, Provincial
Public Accounts Committee 26

Q

Queen Elizabeth II
See Elizabeth II, Queen

Queens
See Monarchs
Question Period
See Oral Question Period

R

Railroads 5, 70
Reasoned amendment 52
Reeves (municipal government) 13
Regulations (from laws) 53
Republic system of government 6, 14
Resignation of government
See Government, Resignation of
Responsible government 3–4, 5, 15
Right to vote 3, 8, 19
Rough fescue grass (emblem) 70
Royal assent 7, 14, 16, 30, 42, 52, 53, 56
Royal Canadian Legion (Alberta-Northwest Territories Command) 35
Rutherford, Alexander 5, 33

S

Saskatchewan 4, 5, 7, 34
Security in the Assembly 34, 58
Senate (Canada) 7, 11, 34
as members of federal cabinet 11
Senate (U.S.) 14, 15, 16
Separation of powers
See Powers, Division of (federal system)
Sergeant-at-Arms 32, 34, 44, 58
photo 34, 36
Session, End of
See Prorogation
Sessions of the Legislature 42
Shadow cabinet 25
Six months' hoist amendment 52
Snap election 18
Speaker
as head of Legislative Assembly Office 37, 57
history of 36–37, 46, 48, 57
Mace as a symbol of authority of 32
photo 36, 37
role of 18, 34, 37–38, 39, 40, 44, 51, 60
Speakers in Alberta, list of 38
Speakers
portraits 66
Speakers' rulings 38, 40

Special committees of the Assembly 25, 27, 43, 44
Special warrants 56
Speech from the Throne 7, 34, 42, 46
Stained glass windows 65, 66
Standing committees of the Assembly 25–26, 43
Standing Orders 26, 40, 60
Stone, Provincial 69
Strangers in the galleries 46
Supplementary estimates 56
Supply 55–56
Symbols and ceremonies 32–35

T

Tabling documents 43, 56
Tartan, Provincial 69
Taxes 2, 5, 10, 11, 37, 42, 50, 54–56
Territorial council (1875) 5
Territorial government 5
Time allocation for debate 39, 51–52
Treasury Board 30, 54, 56
Tree, Provincial 70
Trout (emblem)
See Bull trout (emblem)
Trudeau, Pierre Elliott 7

U

Unicameral system 2, 12, 14
Unwritten rules
See Precedents (Speakers' rulings)

V

Visitors/Guests, Introduction of 43, 46
Visitors' programs 58
Votes, Free
See Free votes by Members
Voting districts
See Constituencies
Voting in elections 18–21, 28
Voting in state Legislatures 15, 16
Voting in the provincial Legislature 15, 23, 51
Voting rights
See Right to vote

W

Walpole, Sir Robert 3, 54

Website
See Legislative Assembly website
Wild rose (emblem) 33, 35, 69
Women's right to vote 3, 19
Written questions 43, 45, 48
Written rules
See Standing Orders

Y

Yukon Legislative Assembly 13

Study Questions

Study Questions

1. The Parliamentary System in Alberta

a) The Canadian parliamentary system has three main origins. What are they?

_____

_____

_____

b) *True or False*: Responsible government means that the cabinet cannot continue to govern unless a majority in the Assembly votes in favour of its major Bills and budget proposals.

c) Canada's and Britain's Parliaments are bicameral, meaning they have two Houses. Britain's Parliament has a House of Commons and a _____ while Canada's _____ has a House of Commons and _____.

d) Canada's system is different from Britain's in that it is a _____, meaning it has a national government plus a Legislature in each province and territory.

e) Name the provinces and territories that were part of the North-West Territories of 1870.

_____

_____

_____

f) Name Alberta's first Premier. _____

g) How many constituencies did Alberta have when the Liberals were elected in 1905? _____

How many seats did the Liberals win? _____

h) In 1905 Alberta and _____ became provinces.

2. Two Styles of Governing

a) What structure of government do both Canada and the U.S. have?

_____

b) What are the three "powers" of a system of government?

_____

_____

_____

What do they do?

_____

_____

c) Most United States state Legislatures are bicameral.
What does this mean?

_____

_____

d) Who is the head of state in the U.S.? In Canada?

_____

_____

e) *True or False*: Political parties play a bigger role in a Canadian Legislature than in a U.S. Legislature.

3. The Provincial General Election

a) How many constituencies does Alberta have?_____

b) *True or False*: If you didn't vote in the last election, the MLA for your constituency doesn't represent you.

c) Name three factors that influence electoral boundaries.

_____

_____

_____

d) What constituency are you in?_____

If you don't know, how would you find out?_____

_____

4. You and Your MLA

a) Television coverage of Oral Question Period has helped to change the nature of the MLA's job. What impact do you think media coverage has had on our representatives' jobs?

_____

_____

_____

b) *True or False*: MLAs have nothing to do when the Assembly is not in session.

c) Name two ways your MLA can help you solve a problem.

_____

_____

d) A citizen group formed to express concerns about one specific issue, such as impaired driving, is called a

_____ - _____ group.

e) All MLAs from one party are called a_____.

f) Cabinet Ministers have two roles: they represent the people in their constituency, and they are heads of_____

g) What is the role of an opposition party?

_____

_____

_____

h) Name a standing committee.

_____

i) Two of your responsibilities as a citizen are to _____

and to _____.

5. Executive Council

a) What are the three branches of government?

_____

_____

_____

b) Which branch includes the cabinet?

_____

c) The cabinet puts policies into practice through_____

and _____in government departments.

d) A proposed law is called a_____.

e) Where do Cabinet Ministers sit in the Chamber?

_____

f) An MLA who is not in cabinet is called a

_____

6. Symbols and Ceremonies: the Mace and the Black Rod

a) The Mace is the symbol of_____.

b) *True or False*: Our Constitution says that every Assembly must have a Mace.

c) The first Maces were_____
that King's bodyguards carried into battle.

d) Alberta's first Mace was made by_____.

e) *True or False*: Alberta's first Mace was made out of scrap material.

f) *True or False*: The opening of the first sitting of the First Session of Alberta's First Legislature was held at a roller and ice rink.

g) Our current Mace has a carving of a _____ at the top.

h) What does the Black Rod symbolize?

_____

When does the Sergeant-at-Arms use it?

_____

7. The Speaker

a) *True or False*: The Speaker is appointed by the Lieutenant Governor.

b) Who was the first Speaker in Great Britain?

_____

In what year was he first called by that title?

_____

c) Where did the term "Speaker" come from?

_____

_____

_____

d) The Speaker is the servant of the Assembly and must treat all Members the same. Name three ways that the Speaker does this

_____

_____

_____

e) The Speaker is the head of the _____ Office, which provides services to all MLAs.

f) The key aspects of the Speakership are _____

and _____

g) How many Speakers has Alberta had since 1905? _____

8. Parliamentary Procedure

a) Parliaments have both _____ traditions and _____ rules.

b) In order for the Assembly to run smoothly, it must follow two principles of parliamentary procedure. What are they?

_____

_____

c) A _____ is a tactic used to delay passage of a Bill while _____ can be used to end the delay.

d) _____ _____ means that Members have certain privileges because they are Members.

e) What are Standing Orders, and who writes them?

_____

_____

_____

f) Speakers use _____ to help them make rulings. This term refers to the practices of previous Assemblies.

g) Apart from Standing Orders and precedents Speakers also refer to previous _____ in making their decisions.

9. How the Assembly Works

a) What is the Speech from the Throne?

_____

_____

b) Who gives royal assent to Bills after they have been passed by the Assembly?

_____

_____

c) What are three main types of Bills?

_____

_____

_____

d) Name two committees of the whole Assembly. Who heads both committees?

_____

_____

e) Why does the Speaker leave the Assembly when the committees of the whole Assembly meet?

_____

_____

f) Why do opposition Members move motions for returns?

_____

_____

10. Making Alberta's Laws

a) What is a Bill?

_____

_____

b) *True or False*: The term "reading" refers to the Clerk reading the contents of the Bill before each debate.

c) At second reading Members debate the_____ of a Bill; that is, the ideas behind it and its overall impact on Albertans if it becomes a law.

d) A Member would propose changes to sections of a Bill at what stage?

_____

e) *True or False*: A Bill becomes law as soon as it passes third reading.

11. Putting Your Tax Dollars to Work

a) *True or False*: The word "budget" once meant a bag of medicines and charms.

b) The detailed proposals for spending drawn up by government departments are called _____.

c) What is a fiscal year?

_____

d) The province's main account is called the _____ _____.

e) The Treasurer announces major spending plans for the year in the _____ _____.

f) Government departments receive money according to their _____.

12. The Legislative Assembly Office

a) Who is the head of the Legislative Assembly Office?

_____

b) What committee decides how much MLAs get paid?

_____

c) What does the Deputy Speaker do?

_____

_____

_____

d) The legal advisers to MLAs and the Legislative Assembly Office are called _____ _____.

e) If you lived in Edmonton and wanted to read a print copy of a newspaper from a small town in Alberta, where could you go?

_____

13. It's All in *Hansard*

a) *True or False*: The name *Hansard* comes from the name of a family who published parliamentary proceedings.

b) *True or False*: If a Member forgets to say something during a speech, *Hansard* will add it later.

c) If you wanted to know what your MLA said in the Assembly about an important issue, how could you find out?

_____

_____

_____

d) Try your hand at editing *Hansard*. The following phrases contain words that don't make sense, but they sound like the words the Members actually said. Find the wrong words in the examples below, and change them to the right ones. The samples are taken from Members' actual speeches.

i) "This new system would suit the purposes of a power-hungry, bullying mare with a popular following, for it would allow such a mare total power over the municipal machinery."

ii) "Mr. Speaker, I would like to present the petition of more than 17,000 people calling upon the government to enact amendments to the Workers' Compensation Act covering fire juries."

iii) "Just because the poor guy disagrees with you, you attack him. It shows that ours is the only party that encourages descent."

iv) "Mr. Speaker, we received many excellent entries, and some of the winning postures are on display in the Legislature pedway."

v) "Grizzly and black bears, cougars, woodland caribou, links: those aren't bad."

vi) "Thousands of citizens are suffering through no fault of their own but by reason of a lacks enforcement of the Act."

14. The Legislature Building

a) Name two reasons why Edmonton was chosen as the capital city.

_____

_____

b) The architectural style of the building is called

_____ _____

c) Construction of the building was started in_____ (year)
and finished in_____

d) Our elected officials meet in the_____for their sittings.

e) Who was Alberta named after?_____

15. The Emblems of Alberta

a) What is Alberta's motto?

_____

What does it stand for?

_____

b) What are the colours in our tartan?

_____

What do they stand for?

_____

c) Name two reasons why the lodgepole pine is our official tree.

_____

_____

d) If you could choose a different bird or mammal emblem for Alberta to symbolize our history, people and values, what would it be and why?_____

_____

_____

Answer Key

1. The Parliamentary System in Alberta

a) Greece, Rome and Britain
b) True
c) House of Lords, Senate
d) federation
e) Saskatchewan, Alberta, Manitoba, Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut
f) Alexander Cameron Rutherford
g) 25, 23
h) Saskatchewan

2. Two Styles of Governing

a) They are both federations.
b) executive, proposes new laws and administers them; legislative, approves executive proposals for new laws; judicial, enforces laws through the courts
c) There are two legislative Chambers or Houses.
d) US: President (federal level), Governor (state level); Canada: Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II
e) True

3. The Provincial General Election

a) 87
b) False. He or she represents everyone in the constituency.
c) change in population distribution, common interests of communities, geographical boundaries
d) call Elections Alberta, 780.427.7191; or Legislature Information, 780.427.2826; or check Assembly website, www.assembly.ab.ca

4. You and Your MLA

a) has made them more visible and accessible; therefore, people are more likely to seek their help
b) False. MLAs have to represent their constituents, sit on committees and carry out other duties of public office. Cabinet Ministers and associate ministers also have duties related to their ministries.
c) refer you to the person most able to help, act as an advocate for you
d) special-interest
e) caucus
f) government departments (sometimes called ministries)

g) hold government accountable, propose improvements, show the public that it is an alternative to the party in power
h) There are many correct answers, including Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund, Legislative Offices, Public Accounts, Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing, Private Bills, et cetera.
i) keep informed, vote

5. Executive Council

a) legislative, executive, judicial
b) executive
c) laws, programs
d) Bill
e) in the front row on the Speaker's right-hand side
f) private Member

6. Symbols and Ceremonies: the Mace and the Black Rod

a) the Assembly's authority
b) False. Having a Mace is a tradition that became, over time, an unwritten rule.
c) clubs
d) Rufus E. Butterworth
e) True
f) True (the Thistle roller and ice rink)
g) beaver
h) The Black Rod represents the Assembly's independence from the Crown. It is used when the Sergeant-at-Arms is asking permission for the monarch's representative to enter the Chamber.

7. The Speaker

a) False. The Speaker is elected by fellow Members.
b) Sir Thomas Hungerford, 1377
c) The Speaker's job was to communicate the monarch's wishes to parliament and parliament's resolutions back to the monarch; the Speaker was the monarch's "mouthpiece."
d) ensures that all MLAs follow the rules in the Chamber, gives all MLAs a fair chance to speak, does not take part in debate (does not take sides)
e) Legislative Assembly
f) authority, impartiality
g) 12

8. Parliamentary Procedure

a) unwritten, written
b) The government must be able to get its business done, and the opposition must have a fair chance to state their views.
c) filibuster, time allocation
d) parliamentary privilege
e) the written rules of Alberta's Assembly, the Assembly
f) precedents
g) Speakers' rulings

9. How the Assembly Works

a) the government's plan of action for the session
b) the Lieutenant Governor
c) government Bills, private Members' public Bills, private Bills
d) Committee of Supply; Committee of the Whole; Chair of Committees
e) a tradition stemming from British history when the Speaker was close to the monarch and the Assembly did not trust him
f) to seek possibly controversial documents from the government

10. Making Alberta's Laws

a) a proposed law that must receive three readings plus committee study before passing in the Assembly
b) False. In parliamentary history the Clerk read Bills because many Members couldn't read or write. Today he or she reads only the title in the Assembly.
c) principle
d) Committee of the Whole
e) False. It must receive royal assent from the Lieutenant Governor before it can become law.

11. Putting Your Tax Dollars to Work

a) True
b) estimates
c) an accounting period (Alberta's is April 1 to March 31)
d) general revenue fund
e) Budget Address
f) programs

12. The Legislative Assembly Office

a) the Speaker
b) the Members' Services Committee
c) The Deputy Speaker takes over in the Chamber when the Speaker is absent; he is the chair of Committee of Supply and Committee of the Whole.
d) Parliamentary Counsel
e) Legislature Library

13. It's All in *Hansard*

a) True
b) False
c) look up the Member's name in the *Hansard* index or do an online search.
d) mare/mayor, juries/injuries, descent/dissent, postures/posters, links/lynx, lacks/lax

14. The Legislature Building

a) named temporary capital by Dominion government; motions to move location not seconded or else defeated
b) beaux arts
c) 1907, 1912
d) Chamber
e) Princess Louise Caroline Alberta (fourth daughter of Queen Victoria)

15. The Emblems of Alberta

a) *Fortis et Liber*, "strong and free"
b) green/forests, gold/wheat, blue/skies and lakes, pink/wild roses, black/coal and petroleum
c) economic importance, is prevalent in the west
d) Answers will vary

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ISBN 978-0-9780115-3-6